REMARKS

UPON

Dr. *BUTLER*'s

SIXTH CHAPTER

OF THE

ANALOGY of RELIGION, &c.

CONCERNING

NECESSITY;

And also upon the

DISSERTATION

OF THE

NATURE of *VIRTUE*.

By PHILANTHROPUS.

-------*Non ut majore reprenso.* HOR.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

THE PREFACE.

THE *following* REMARKS *are only a* part *of thoſe which I have made upon this author; and theſe are ſeparated from the reſt, as being apprehended to be of the greateſt importance, and at the ſame time leaſt likely to encounter with fierce prejudice and partiality. Indeed I make a difference between even theſe remarks that are now publiſh'd, and lay the greateſt ſtreſs upon thoſe on the* diſſertation of the nature of virtue; *and have added the other ſtrictures upon the chapter* of neceſſity, *only becauſe whoever looks upon the end of that chapter, will find a ſtrict connexion of it with the ſubject of the* diſſertation.

IT is moſt likely I ſhall not hereafter publiſh any more remarks upon this author; and therefore I wou'd take this opportunity of reminding him of a few things, in the other parts of his book, which in my humble opinion greatly deſerve to be reviewed and corrected.

Page 127. he ſays, *It may be proper to add, in order to obviate an abſurd and wicked concluſion from any of theſe obſervations, that tho' the conſtitution of our nature* ------ Here the author firſt lays it down for truth, that *it had been much better for the world if evil had never been done* (tho' mens liableneſs to evil might *contribute to the perfection and happineſs of the world, and the actual permiſſion of it be beneficial to the world*, in a certain ſenſe.) Then he advances further, and aſſerts it to be *clearly conceivable, that vice may be beneficial to the world* (meaning poſitively ſo;) *and yet, that it wou'd be infinitely more beneficial for men to refrain from it.* This is at leaſt myſterious, if not contradictory.

THE *world* and *men* (who yet conſtitute the *world)* are diſtinguiſh'd; vice may be good for the one, bad for the other. The *world*, as it ſhould ſeem, may be better for the wickedneſs of it, tho' men themſelves are *infinitely* worſe. Suppoſe all men to have in all ages perfectly abſtained from vice, wou'd not the *world* have been better, more eaſy and happy? that is, wou'd not *all men* have been ſo? therefore vice, upon the whole, cannot be good for the world, or men. On the contrary, there muſt be an over-ballance of miſchief from it to the world, *i. e.* to men, or it wou'd not be what it is; but yet ſome good things may be occaſion'd (not produc'd, not intended) by it; *e. g.* one man's fall may be

be another man's caution; one man's luxury may be another man's ſubſiſtence -----

But put it thus; vice may be beneficial to men, and yet it may be infinitely more beneficial to men to abſtain from it, and the inconſiſtency will clearly appear. If the author ſays, that in the former part of the ſentence he means only a partial good, and what upon the whole is bad may in ſome particular reſpects be good, it may be granted: But if, upon the whole, vice be bad, the objection continues in its force, for any thing he ſays to remove it. This partial beneficialneſs of vice he hints indeed, when he ſays, *in the ſenſe which ſome have aſſerted*; and his manner of illuſtrating his meaning by obſervations from the natural world, may ſhew this farther. *Thus*, ſays he, *in the wiſe and good conſtitution of the natural world, there are* -------- Here he is unhappy in his expreſſions: *No diſorders bring their own cures*, nor can *diſeaſes be remedies* in any other ſenſe than as they may alleviate, in ſome inſtances quite cure, other diſeaſes; but none of 'em can cure or alleviate themſelves; that is quite unintelligible: Their own remedies they cannot be, remedies for each other they may be, and in that reſpect a diſeaſe may be beneficial; but upon the whole they are miſery. Apply this to the caſe in hand, no vice can be its own cure; can any vice be a cure for another, and in that reſpect beneficial? then it may be reaſonably practiſed; as a man

may vomit, or purge himſelf, to cure a fever. On the contrary, is not vice eſſential miſery; and no relief from, of, for miſery in any reſpect whatſoever? Hard then will it be to conceive, that any thing of that ſort *ſhou'd be productive of an over-ballance of happineſs, or a means by which an over-ballance of goodwill in the end be produced.* Yet, if the author does not mean this, he falls quite ſhort of the objections he propoſes to anſwer.

Page 145, the author ſays, *It may poſſibly be diſputed, how far miracles can prove natural religion*------ The moral character and government of God muſt be ſuppoſed, before miracles can give a rational conviction of any thing. If they are the effects of a falſe Being, or of one indifferent to truth and falſhood, what will they prove? The author himſelf ſeems to have been aware of this, and therefore ſays, *Notable objections may be urged againſt this proof of it* (natural religion) *conſidered as a matter of ſpeculation* (how is that? is it not *conſidered* in itſelf; *conſidered* really and truly as it is, in the ſtricteſt manner, and with the beſt judgment?) *but*, ſays he, *conſidered as a practical thing, there can be none.* I am at a loſs here for his meaning. He often, quite through the book, uſes that word *practical* in an unuſual manner, and a very dark one. It is hard to fix the meaning of it here, as any one will find that attempts it, or would ſubſtitute another word in the room of it, by way of explication.

If the meaning is, that miracles can be a good *practical* proof, tho' *ſpeculatively*, i. e. when really and truly, and in themſelves conſidered, they are none at all; this is inconſiſtent. But if he means, that ſuch wonderful effects as miracles will probably in fact and event have ſome influence upon the minds of men, and induce them to attend to, and, in conſequence of ſuch attention, believe natural religion, or ſome part of it, tho' they had never minded it before; this poſſibly may be: But ſtill miracles are no proof, any more than an eclipſe wou'd be; which yet, among ſome ignorant people, might have the ſame effect------What the author really means, I confeſs I do not know. However, let us conſider the caſe he here ſuppoſes, *viz.* a perſon ſent with a power of working miracles, *to teach natural religion to a nation that had lived in total ignorance of it*; the author adds, *or forgetfulneſs*, which has nothing to do here. Miracles may indeed ſerve to rouze a *forgetful* people, and recal to their minds what they knew before; the tendency of miracles this way is eaſily conceiv'd: but when there is an abſolute *ignorance* of the religion of nature, *i. e.* of the moral government of God, *i. e.* of God as a morally perfect being, or as wiſe, and juſt, and good, and true; what can miracles do here? Surely, in order to mens having a notion of a morally perfect being, the governor of the world, men muſt firſt have a notion of moral perfection, of wiſdom, juſtice, good-

goodneſs, veracity, *i. e.* there muſt be a notion of morality, as ſomething moſt real in the nature of things, and right and fitting, as more reaſonable and eligible (to ſay the leaſt) than the contrary, *i. e.* than immorality, immoral temper and practice; and that is, he muſt have a notion of natural religion.

Now the author's caſe is, that of a perſon ſent to a nation wholly ignorant of God and morality, with a power of working miracles, to teach them natural religion, and to declare that he is commiſſion'd by God to do ſo, of which commiſſion his miracles are the evidence -------- Surely here is as much unintelligibleneſs as can be crowded together in ſo ſhort a compaſs. The meſſenger is to declare he is commiſſion'd by God --- what may ſuch a people ſay to this?

" WE do not know what you mean by " that word, *God*; you ſay by this word you " mean a being, *wiſe*, and *juſt*, and *good* and " *faithful*: We underſtand the meaning of " theſe words, as little as we do the other; " nor do we know that *wiſdom*, *juſtice*, *good-* " *neſs*, *veracity*, are at all better than *folly*, " *injuſtice*, *cruelty*, *falſhood* ----- You will " prove your commiſſion, you ſay, by *mi-* " *racles*; and we do ſee you work ſtrange " things; divide the ſea, remove mountains--- " Pray, how ſhall we know that an unjuſt or " malevolent being (in your ſenſe of the " words) does not do, or enable you to do, " theſe things?"

WHAT

WHAT the author can ſay to this, I do not know; but it is plain, that further miracles, even to infinity, will be no anſwer: for miracles can themſelves be no proof that an immoral being does not work them; ſo far from it, that *a God, i.e.* an *infinitely* wiſe and good Being, muſt be ſuppoſed, conceived and believed, before miracles can afford any proper evidence at all: becauſe, 'till *ſuch* a Being is acknowledged, it muſt remain for ever quite uncertain, what is the character of the author of miracles, be they what they will. All that it is poſſible to expect from miracles in ſuch a caſe, (*viz.* that of abſolute ignorance of natural religion) is, that like an eclipſe, or earthquake, or ſtorm, they may chance to awaken mens thoughts, and put them upon conſidering what they had never attended to before; upon which they may diſcover a God, a morally perfect Being, and their own obligations: But miracles can be no more a proof of this than an eclipſe, or earthquake, or ſtorm; and the author's aſſertion is wrong, when he ſays, they *afford a proof of God's general providence as moral governor of the world.* They do not afford any proof of this kind; they do not ſeem capable of it. God's *general providence*, as *moral governor* of the world, is and muſt neceſſarily be pre-ſuppoſed to any evidence at all from miracles, and I might add, to the very being of them; as wou'd plainly appear from any definition of the word, beyond merely " an

effect

" effect or event different from, or contrary to
" the uſual courſe of nature."

But may not they be an *additional* evidence? And I really think, not ſo much; and the inſtance the author mentions, by no means proves it. *Let us ſuppoſe*, ſays he, *a man of the greateſt and moſt improved capacity, who had never heard of revelation, convinced upon the whole, notwithſtanding the diſorders of the world* ------ Here I am at a loſs for the author's meaning. If theſe are real *diſorders* in the make, conſtitution, or government of the world, they will be an inſuperable objection to men of all capacities, and to *men of the greateſt and moſt improv'd capacities*, the greateſt. But if he means only the *diſorders* ariſing from the follies and vices of men, they are no objection at all; or not ſuch, but a very moderate *capacity* may get over.----- He goes on; *convinced upon the whole----- that the world was under the direction and moral government of an infinitely perfect Being; but ready to queſtion whether he was not got beyond the reach of his faculties* ----- What ſhou'd induce him to ſtart ſuch a queſtion? I hope it cou'd not be the obſcure evidence of a God, a morally wiſe and good Being; conſequently of a moral governor of the world: And it cou'd not be the moral diſorders of the world ariſing from mens immoral behaviour; becauſe the moral government of the world pre-ſuppoſes the poſſibility of ſuch diſorders; and conſequently, when they happen, they cannot be an objection,

or

or at leaſt not ſuch a one, but a moderate capacity may get over it. The author ſhou'd certainly have aſſigned a reaſon, a better than what he hints at----- but he goes on, and *ſuppoſes the man* (this doubting, heſitating man) *thro' this ſuſpicion brought into great danger of being carried away by the bad example of all around him*------ Danger he wou'd be in (as every one is now) tho' he had no ſuch heſitation and ſuſpicion as the author ſpeaks of --- but what follows is ſomewhat extraordinary; *and this, perhaps, wou'd be as advantageous a ſituation, with regard to religion, as nature alone ever placed any man in*: that is, *nature* places no man, tho' of the greateſt and moſt improv'd capacity in a better ſituation, reſpecting his notion of a God, and moral governor of the world, than that of doubt, and fear of a deception. Then ſurely, no more can be required of any man, than only a ſuſpenſion of judgment in ſuch a caſe, or ſomething very near it: Whatever is determined, it ſhou'd be doubtingly, with a ſuſpicion of a deception. *Nature* goes no farther than this.

But ſurely we may learn better, even from revelation itſelf. The *Pſalmiſt* tells us, *that the heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament ſheweth his handy-work.* And St. *Paul, that the inviſible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; ſo that they are with-*

out excuſe. Where the apoſtle, we ſee, pronounces the idolatrous and wicked *Gentiles* to be quite inexcuſable, *i. e.* their idolatry and wickedneſs were without excuſe; not to be ſure, becauſe they knew not God, or becauſe they doubted concerning the being of God; but, on the contrary, becauſe tho' they *knew God*, they glorified him not as God, by an upright and virtuous behaviour. And let it be by the by obſerv'd, the apoſtle ſpeaks of the heathens here, only upon the foot of nature, and of the light which the natural works of God not only might, but actually did afford them. Is that *ſituation* then, that doubting ſuſpicious one of our author's, the very beſt that *nature ever placed any man in?*---

HOWEVER, admit the author's caſe, as he himſelf puts it, and let him proceed; *What a confirmation*, ſays he, *now muſt it be to ſuch a perſon, all at once, to find that this moral ſyſtem of things was reveal'd to mankind, in the name of that infinite Being, whom he had from principles of reaſon believed in, and that the publiſhers of the revelation proved their commiſſion?*

THE caſe he himſelf put was, that of a man *doubting* concerning a God, the moral governor of the world; here it is altered, and the man from *principles of reaſon believes* a God: And, I own, that a man *believing* a God, a morally good governor of the world, ſuch a one may hearken to a revelation, and rationally believe it upon the evidence of miracles;

racles; for ſuch a one may have reaſon to think that God wou'd not ſuffer miracles to be wrought to atteſt a falſhood. But as plain it is on the other hand, that if a man doubts concerning God, whether his being, or his moral perfection, he muſt equally doubt concerning miracles ſaid to be wrought by him; and conſequently, they cannot do any thing towards removing his original doubt; but, in ſpite of all the miracles in the world, his doubt muſt ſtill remain: and, if ever it be removed, it muſt be by ſomething elſe than miracles, if he acts rationally, and is not caught by a mere ſurprize.

Page 182. the author tells us, *That a precept can change the whole nature of an action.* A precept muſt be grounded upon ſome reaſon; when this reaſon is known, the action will be done with a regard to that, as well as the enjoining power: if it be not ſeen, yet the command ſuppoſes it; and therefore does not change the nature of the action at all. Let me ask, why will not a command alter the nature of treachery, cruelty, ingratitude, and juſtify an action proceeding from any of theſe diſpoſitions? Why will it not alter a *temper*, as well as an *action*? It will do both alike, that is, it will do neither; it is only a declaration of a being's pleaſure. If it be mere abſolute pleaſure, it is nothing; if it be grounded upon reaſon, the action wou'd be reaſonable without an expreſs command, ſuppoſing the reaſon to be known; but it cannot be always known. Yet, ſince we are

antecedently certain every command from God muſt be founded in good reaſon, we have the beſt reaſon for an implicit obedience to his laws, when the reaſon of them is not ſeen by us. This ſeems much more to the purpoſe than what the author here ſays; and in this way, he wou'd not have been driven to that hard ſhift, in what follows;

Page 183. *And tho' a courſe of external acts, which, without command, wou'd be immoral, muſt make an immoral habit; yet a few detach'd commands have no ſuch natural tendency.* What is meant by a *few detach'd commands?* The expreſſion is irregular: It ſhou'd have been ſaid, *a few external actions*, in obedience to a few detach'd commands, have no ſuch natural tendency ----- Every action tends to an habit; a *few* tend in their meaſure to an habit. If the habit which theſe few external actions tend to produce, is bad, the command cannot make it good: If it can, why ſhou'd the author be afraid of ſuppoſing a great many of theſe commands, and a great many of theſe actions in obedience to them; ſince all ſuch actions are good, and the habits they tend to are good, from the command? If commands can thus transform actions and habits from bad into good, it wou'd be deſirable ſure to have them multiplied to any number.

In the chapter *of the particular ſyſtem, &c.* the author appears, *page* 194. to make the efficacy of repentance much more uncertain than

than it is upon all our notions of *goodneſs*: Tho' it ſhou'd ſeem ever ſo improbable, that a ſinning creature can by any repentance be in the ſame ſtate with reſpect to the favour of God, as it wou'd have been upon the continuance of its innocence; yet ſurely it is a poor conceſſion to ſay, repentance will not be *uſeleſs*. The author had reaſon to add, *page* 200 his *God-forbid*. Neither is he very conſiſtent, when he queſtions its efficacy to prevent the puniſhment annexed to vice; for if it does not do this in any degree, it is *uſeleſs*; and in whatever degree it does not do it, it is *ſo far* uſeleſs. On the contrary, it is very agreeable to reaſon, to think that one penitent creature may be in a much better ſtate with reſpect to the favour of God, than another that never ſinned, and certainly may be a much more amiable and deſerving being. And perhaps, whereas this author is ready enough to grant that repentance cannot be uſeleſs, let him but conſider the reaſons for this conceſſion, and he will find himſelf obliged by them to carry up the *uſefulneſs* of repentance to the higheſt degree.

THERE is no arguing from human goodneſs in this caſe, for a plain reaſon; nor from the notions which mankind had of expiatory ſacrifices, for as plain a reaſon. I ſhou'd think theſe reaſons are ſo obvious, they ſhou'd not be mention'd.

HOWEVER, with reſpect to the latter, ſince the author aſſerts, *page* 234. that *it*

was

was the general opinion under the light of nature, that repentance, and reformation alone, and by itſelf, was not ſufficient to do away ſin; and this aſſertion ſeems to be grounded chiefly, rather wholly, upon the prevalence of ſacrifices among the heathens; I cannot but obſerve, that it ſeems to have been a great while after ſacrificing was firſt introduced, that mankind had any notion of an *expiatory* ſacrifice. From *Cain* and *Abel*, whoſe ſacrifices were the firſt that we read of, down to *Moſes* we have no account of any ſuch ſacrifice. And I obſerve further, that after this notion of a propitiatory ſacrifice was introduced, there is not the leaſt reaſon to think that ſuch ſacrifices were intended to make up the deficiencies of real repentance; but on the contrary, the moſt univerſally prevalent notion was, that they were to ſupply the place of it: As men had rather part with a beaſt, than not gratify their favourite paſſions; ſo it plainly appears that they look'd upon ſacrificing as quitting ſcores with the God they had offended; and after that they were to begin a-new. I do not think that the leaſt evidence can be produced to ſhew, that in any age of the world, or any people, an expiatory ſacrifice was intended to be *in aid* of ſincere repentance.

BUT to proceed:

Page 201. after the author has granted that repentance cannot be *uſeleſs*, it muſt be not a little ſurprizing to ſee him coming to a concluſion

cluſion directly inconſiſtent with that conceſſion, poor as it is. *Upon the whole then, had the laws, the general laws of God's government, been permitted to operate without any interpoſition in our behalf, the future puniſhment, for ought we know to the contrary, or have any reaſon to think, muſt inevitably have followed, notwithſtanding any thing we cou'd have done to prevent it.* This is plainly taking away what was before granted, and making repentance *uſeleſs*. But on the contrary, as was juſt obſerved, if the author has any *reaſon to think* repentance cannot be *uſeleſs*, the ſame reaſon will oblige him to allow it to be greatly *uſeful*; and conſequently, that the future puniſhment is not quite ſo *inevitable* as to render the endeavours of offending creatures to prevent it, of no effect, and to no purpoſe.

THAT expreſſion, *of the general laws of God's government being permitted to operate*--- is a very obſcure one, and I believe cannot be explained in any intelligible conſiſtent manner; but I chuſe to go on with the author.

Ibid. *In this darkneſs, or this light of nature*, ſays he, *call it which you pleaſe, revelation comes in, confirms every doubting fear*---- It is too commonly ſeen, that men are apt to run into one extream in order to avoid another. Thus, when revelation is to be diſparaged, the light of nature muſt be cried up beyond what it really is; and when revelation

lation is to be exalted beyond its proper value, the light of nature muſt be depreſſed and abuſed. This latter extream ſeems to be what our author is chargeable with. And he plainly goes out of his way, and offends againſt his own character, in a ſort of puerility of ſtyle, to which his whole book, or any other, hardly will afford a parallel inſtance. *In this darkneſs, or this light of nature, call it which you pleaſe*----Revelation no more extends to every thing than the light of nature. Now ſhou'd any one, obſerving this or the other particular about which revelation is ſilent, immediately ſay, *in this darkneſs, or this light of revelation, call it as you pleaſe* ---- he wou'd certainly be reckoned very impertinent and childiſh at leaſt, if not profane. Why, the light of nature is as valuable and neceſſary as the light of revelation, and more ſo; for revelation is nothing without it: let it be ever ſo contracted and deficient, remove it out of the way, and revelation muſt of neceſſity go along with it. Conſequently, all reflecting, depreciating expreſſions concerning the light of nature, will ever terminate at length in the diſcredit of revelation. And if nature is ſilent or uncertain, as to the method of reconciliation upon ſuppoſition of mens offending againſt the law of God; this ſilence or uncertainty may be call'd the defect, or the *darkneſs* of nature: but why ſhou'd it be called, abuſively, what it is not, the *light* of nature? And as to the remainder of this remarkable paragraph;

I WOULD ask, and ſhould be glad to know, where the ſcripture repreſents mankind to be in ſuch a *ſtate of ruin*, as that there *are no righteous perſons, who need no repentance* ------ and where it teaches us, that the *rules of divine government* are ſo ſtrait, as not to *admit of pardon* (a bad expreſſion) immediately upon repentance-----or, where it ſpeaks ſo ſlightly of repentance, as the author appears to do here, and throughout this chapter? We find God himſelf, who muſt beſt know the nature of his own kingdom, aſſerting and vindicating the juſtice and equity of his government, *Ezekiel* xviii. by aſſuring every one of pardon and favour immediately upon repentance; intimating, nay, plainly declaring, the rule of his government would not be *equal*, if it were otherwiſe: and laſtly, our Saviour has himſelf aſſured us, that *there is joy in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, more than over many juſt perſons, who need no repentance.* The ſenſe of theſe words muſt not be explained away.

NOR do I think it ſhou'd be overlook'd, that the author is here, by a certain heat, not uſual with him, carried into an appearing inconſiſtency. He ſays, in the preceding paragraph, *that had the laws----been permitted to operate, the future puniſhment* of a breach of them *muſt inevitably have followed, for any reaſon* we have to the contrary: Yet here he allows, *that nature might juſtly have hoped, that the moral government of the univerſe was not ſo rigid, but that there was room for an in-*

poſition----Now whatever reaſons nature cou'd find out to hope that the governor of the univerſe admitted of *interpoſition* on the behalf of ſinners, the ſame reaſons wou'd equally prove that it admitted of *repentance*, or that there was ground to hope repentance wou'd be accepted; and conſequently, that the breach of divine laws would not be *inevitably* followed by the puniſhment annexed to them. If the author pleaſes to produce his reaſons for the one, it will be preſently ſeen whether they will not extend to the other.

Page 226. the author having laid it down, that *temptations render our ſtate a more improving ſtate of diſcipline*------ then obſerves, that *ſpeculative difficulties* (meaning the difficulties in which the evidence of religion is involved) *are of the very ſame nature with thoſe external temptations.* If temptations render the preſent ſtate a *more improving ſtate of diſcipline* (I ſuppoſe he means, improve it as a ſtate of diſcipline; make it more a ſtate of diſcipline than otherwiſe it wou'd be; or elſe the expreſſion is very inaccurate) yet it is evident there muſt be ſome proportion of them, beyond which they ſhou'd not go. If they are not proportion'd to the capacity, the power of thoſe who are in ſuch a ſtate of diſcipline, it is plain they are *beyond* what they ought to be. If they are in ſuch a degree as is more likely in fact and event to ruin mens virtue, or to make them vicious, than otherwiſe, they are analogous to the

diſcipline

diſcipline of a ſchool, which by its ſeverity makes boys blockheads more generally than ſcholars. The author perhaps wou'd do well, upon this occaſion, to review what he has often ſaid concerning that ſtate of diſcipline which men are in, and ſee whether he has not wound it up ſo high, as to render it deſtructive of mens innocence, rather than improving of their virtue.

But then, as he cannot but own, that antecedent to revelation, the chriſtian at leaſt, the ſtate of diſcipline in which men were placed, was ſevere enough with reſpect to temptations; ſo ſevere indeed, that in fact there were always more vicious men than virtuous, according to his own opinion; there cou'd be no occaſion to multiply theſe temptations by others, whether of the ſame or any other kind. If not of the ſame nature, ſurely not of any other; for if there were before temptations enough, extraordinarily to add to them, I ſay *extraordinarily*, ſeems only to be taking extraordinary pains to do miſchief. But ſurely the author will allow, that the deſign of revelation, the chriſtian eſpecially, muſt be to leſſen the difficulties and diſcouragements of all kinds, which virtue labour'd under, *i. e.* to remove *temptations*, by quite taking away ſome, and breaking the force of others. How can he then conſiſtently repreſent it as adding to and encreaſing the number and ſorts of them; and this, to render *diſcipline* more ſevere, which

before was confeſſedly great and ſevere enough, too great, too ſevere, to anſwer its end (unleſs we are here to look for ſome myſterious end) according to his own way of repreſenting things?

And I cannot but think, that the ſuppoſition he makes, *page* 228. and the caſe he puts afterwards, ſerve only to improve the ſeverity of this way of thinking concerning the evidence of religion. He imagines certain perſons, by ſuperior advantages of mind, body, ſituation, and circumſtances, ſo very happily inclined to virtue, that it is *no more a diſcipline to them, than it is to creatures in a ſtate of perfection.* Wou'd not one then think it equally right (to ſay the leaſt) that they ſhou'd be no more diſturbed or tempted to do amiſs, than creatures in (what he calls) a *ſtate of perfection?* But the author appears to be of another mind: and as, in his opinion, it is abſolutely neceſſary that every body ſhould have temptations and difficulties of ſome kind to exerciſe their virtue, and try if they will not be vicious, and the perſons mentioned are not capable of being influenc'd by external and ordinary temptations; it may be right to try, whether by leaving the evidence of religion itſelf defective, leſs or more, they may not be influenced ſo far as to queſtion its truth, and give it up; the reſult of which will be the giving up their virtue. Thus, here is a great and extraordinary means uſed for the ſecurity and promotion of virtue

univer-

univerſally, *viz.* revelation, which very thing yet, by the imperfect manner in which the evidence of it is left, is profeſſedly deſigned to try the virtue of *ſome*, and lay the *only* conceivable temptation before them to give it up, which otherwiſe they had never parted with.

YET this, bad as it is, wou'd not be quite ſo intolerable, if the tendency and influence of ſuch a temptation cou'd be confined to thoſe men, who are ſo happily ſuperior to others, as to parts, acquirements, and ſituation in the world; if in its nature it cou'd be a difficulty and an exerciſe, or a diſcipline *only* to them. But, alas, the caſe is juſt the reverſe: the defectiveneſs of the evidence of revealed religion muſt, in its own nature, be as much a temptation to all the reſt of mankind, the ignorant, the weak, the vicious, even thoſe who are the moſt unhappy in their ſituation and circumſtances, and who therefore ſtand moſt in need of an extraordinary relief. And I add, that ſuch a temptation muſt be *greater to them* than to any body elſe: for, with reſpect to many, perhaps moſt of theſe, the denial of revelation wou'd deſtroy all the foundation of virtue; whereas a man of real parts and improvements may poſſibly ſee reaſon enough in the nature of things, to retain his morality, tho' he queſtion or give up revelation.

AND whereas the author ſeems to think himſelf ſupported in his reflection on this ſubject by the authority of ſcripture, he may

pleaſe

pleaſe to conſider, that thoſe texts which he cites on this occaſion, are not at all to the purpoſe; for they do not ſpeak of any temptation laid before virtuous men; but only of a judicial leaving thoſe perſons to their own imagination, who had wilfully and obſtinately hardened themſelves againſt the effect of fair and reaſonable means of conviction: thoſe who, thro' habitual wickedneſs, had loſt as it were the power of doing well; who, tho' they had eyes, yet cou'd not ſee, and ears, yet cou'd not hear------

But theſe incidental remarks have run out into too great a length----I will therefore only add, that I hope the author of the Analogy *will not find, that either in theſe remarks, or in thoſe that follow, I have wilfully miſtaken or perverted his ſenſe, or allowed myſelf in any unhandſome reflections.*

REMARKS

On the Sixth CHAPTER of

The ANALOGY, &c. *of the Opinion of Neceſſity, conſidered as influencing Practice.*

THE author ſays, Page 105. *That when it is ſaid, by a Fataliſt, that the whole conſtitution of nature, and the actions of men, that every thing and every mode and circumſtance of every thing, is neceſſary, and could not poſſibly have been otherwiſe; yet it is obſerved, that this neceſſity does not exclude deliberation, choice, preference.*--- Now this, I think, is plainly to make *neceſſity*, if not the ſame thing as *liberty*, yet perfectly conſiſtent with it; and it is to ſay, that tho' the actions of men, and every circumſtance of them, are *neceſſary*, yet they are at the ſame time *free:* Than which there cannot be a plainer contradiction.

AND

AND the conſequence immediately drawn from this Obſervation, will, I ſuppoſe, be thought a ſtrange one, *viz. That neceſſity alone is in no ſort an account of the conſtitution of nature, and how things came to be;---but only an account of this circumſtance relating to their origin.* This circumſtance is the *neceſſity* of their origin and continuance; and neceſſity is an anſwer to the queſtion, *How things came to be and to continue as they are?*

AND tho' the author in the next ſentence denies, *That the aſſertion that every thing is by neceſſity of nature is an anſwer to the queſtion, whether the world came into being as it is, by an intelligent agent forming it thus, or not---* I think he is miſtaken; for it is in the ſtrongeſt manner denying it. It is denying it, and at the ſame time giving a reaſon for the denial. It is removing one thing, by putting another directly contrary to and inconſiſtent with it. And what follows there, *pag.* 106. where the author imagines that an *agent acting neceſſarily*, will better account for any thing than *neceſſity*, ſeems very ſhort. The one is an abſtract word, and the other a contradiction. The agency of both muſt be alike and equal.

Ibid. SPEAKING of the *neceſſity* by which the Deity exiſts, a *neceſſity antecedent to deſign*, he adds, *It cannot be meant, that every thing exiſts, as it does, by this kind of neceſſity --- becauſe it is admitted that deſign in the actions*

actions of men contributes to many alterations in nature. No Fataliſt can make this conceſſion, without immediately ceaſing to be what he is. If he admits that men are capable of deliberation, choice, preference, deſign and action, inſtead of *neceſſary* he makes them free beings: For freedom can mean, can imply nothing more than is expreſſed by theſe words. Nor can he, conſiſtently, allow, that men *contribute to* alterations in nature, otherwiſe than as mere inſtruments. The author's conſequences from hence are therefore quite out of the way.

PARTICULARLY he ſays, *page* 107. *Neceſſity as much requires and ſuppoſes a neceſſary agent, as freedom requires and ſuppoſes a free agent, to be the former of the world: and the appearances of deſign and of final cauſes in the conſtitution of nature, as really prove this acting agent to be an intelligent deſigner, or to act from choice, upon the ſcheme of neceſſity, ſuppoſed poſſible, as upon that of freedom.* The Fataliſt will ſay, that neceſſity no more requires a neceſſary agent to be the former of the world, than the author himſelf ſuppoſes it requires ſuch an agent to be the former of God. And tho' the Fataliſt will allow the *appearance* of final cauſes and deſign, he will utterly deny the reality of them; and will ſay (and truly) that to allow a *neceſſary* agent to be an *intelligent deſigner, and to act from choice,* is quite to confound the two ideas of neceſſity

and liberty, and make them the ſame thing: Than which there cannot be a plainer contradiction. And ſurely the author is too haſty in his concluſion from ſuch reaſoning; that the *notion of neceſſity does not deſtroy the proof that there is an intelligent author of nature, and natural governor of the world* --- Put it thus; hence it appears that there is no abſurdity in ſuppoſing the intelligent author of nature to *act neceſſarily*; or, that a being acting neceſſarily may be the intelligent author of nature, and natural governor of the world; and the inconſiſtency muſt be plain. This is again manifeſtly to confound *neceſſity* and *liberty*; and leave no poſſible diſtinction between them.

HOWEVER, hence the author goes on to conſider, whether neceſſity may not be *as conſiſtent with religion*, as with the conſtitution of nature. I ſhould think much the ſame, *i. e.* quite inconſiſtent with either and both. Tho' it may be obſerved, there is, *prima facie*, a difference. Thoſe words, *conſtitution of nature*, do not imply any notion of *liberty*. But it is much otherwiſe with the term *religion*. This very word does ſo clearly and immediately include a notion of *freedom*, that could one ſuppoſe there was no ſuch thing as freedom any where, but that ſtrict *neceſſity* prevailed equally thro' the univerſe, we could not but preſently infer with the utmoſt ſecurity, that religion could be no where. Therefore in whatever

parts

parts of the univerſe *neceſſity* obtains, there religion is and muſt neceſſarily be excluded. The author ſeems to think otherwiſe.----But how does he make it appear?

FIRST, he ſuppoſes a child put under the inſtruction of a Fataliſt---and, after the inſtruction is carried on a good way, he apoſtrophizes, and aſks Common Senſe whether a child is to be put under ſuch inſtruction, or upon ſuch *ſpeculations*; and adds, in a ſort of parentheſis, that *we are all children in ſuch ſpeculations as theſe*.---I am at a loſs for the meaning of this; and for what reaſon this obſervation is made. To ſay, a man is a child in ſuch a ſpeculation, is to ſay, he has not a capacity for it; that it is quite above him. But this is ſo far from being true of any thing that has been yet ſaid, that any man, tho' of but moderate faculties, may ſee the abſurdity of the Fataliſt's inſtructions thus far. But if the ſubject of *neceſſity* be ſo impenetrable a one, why is it applied here at all to religion? Surely, firſt to apply it, and then ſay it cannot be applied for want of faculties, is not very conſiſtent. And,

SECONDLY, he ſhews, *page* 109. from fact and experience, that the notion of *neceſſity*, when applied to *religion*, is *miſapplied*; in the ſame way as when applied to practice in any other caſe; and infers, that tho' the opinion of *neceſſity* were ſpeculatively true, yet with regard to practice it is as if it were

falſe: *For the conſtitution of the world, and the condition in which we are placed, is as if we were free.* If this be ſo, I reckon we cannot have, nor even wiſh for, a better proof of liberty. Nor is it conceivable how the author can at the ſame time ſuppoſe the *ſpeculative*, i. e. the real truth of *neceſſity*? And is not his manner of expreſſing the force of one of the beſt arguments for liberty ſingularly tender and heſitating? *It may---perhaps---juſtly be concluded, that ſince the whole proceſs of action is as if we were free, therefore we are ſo.*

Page 100. AND he will not inſiſt upon it; but upon another thing; *viz. That under the preſent natural government of the world, we are treated and dealt with as if we were free, prior to all conſideration, whether we are ſo or not. Prior to all conſideration*---- I ſuppoſe he muſt mean prior to all conſideration of ours; *i. e.* whether we think ſo or not; or whatever we think concerning our freedom or neceſſity, we are treated as tho' we were free. To what purpoſe this obſervation is made, I know not. But I ſhould think it will follow from hence, that we are free. We are treated as if we were free; therefore we are ſo. And I cannot but reckon it ſtrange in the author, immediately after this, in the next ſentence, to ſuppoſe again the truth of neceſſity.

Ibid.

Ibid. AND to talk of the *intereſt* of neceſſary beings, and that the opinion of neceſſity, tho' true (for that is the ſuppoſition) can ever poſſibly miſlead any body, is as ſtrange as the reſt. If true, how can it miſlead? If every thing, and every mode of every thing, be neceſſary, there can be no miſleading; there can be no error or miſtake; no miſtaking of intereſt; and no intereſt. *Intereſt* denotes the preferableneſs of one ſet of circumſtances to another; and that the being whoſe circumſtances either of theſe may be, may ſee this preferableneſs, and actually prefer the one to the other, and direct his practice accordingly: all which ſeems quite inconſiſtent with neceſſity. If the being can do nothing of this, the intereſt of ſuch a one is no more intelligible than that of a machine.

AND what follows is to me quite inconceivable: *How can people think themſelves ſo very ſecure then, that the ſame application of the ſame opinion may not miſlead them alſo, in ſome analogous manner, with reſpect to a future----intereſt?* And when the author gives a reaſon why people ſhould not reckon themſelves *ſecure*, I believe it is what no one can underſtand: *For religion being*, as he ſays, *a practical ſubject, and the analogy of nature ſhewing us, that we have not faculties to apply this opinion, were it a true one, to practical ſubjects; whenever we do apply it to the ſubject of religion, and thence conclude that*

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we are free from its obligations, it is plain this concluſion cannot be depended upon. It would be ſtrange indeed if we had faculties to apply *neceſſity* to *practical ſubjects*; i. e. (if I miſtake not) to ſubjects which cannot poſſibly be in nature, upon that ſuppoſition. They are quite inconſiſtent and contradictory. He ſays, *neceſſity is not applicable to practical ſubjects.*---- If the notion of neceſſity be true, it muſt be applicable to every thing that really is. If it is not applicable to *practical* ſubjects, either the one or the other muſt be given up; for they are abſolutely inconſiſtent. The author indeed expreſſes himſelf more tenderly upon this head: He ſays, neceſſity is not applicable, *for want of faculties*; and therefore, with reſpect to practical ſubjects, is *as if it were not true*; by the manner of expreſſion, leaving it plainly uncertain at leaſt, whether it be not in itſelf true, and what we might diſcern to be ſo, had we other faculties than we have at preſent. But this falls much ſhort of what our faculties, ſuch as they are, are capable of doing, and in fact do, whenever we apply them to the conſideration of theſe ſubjects. It is true, we cannot apply the notion of *neceſſity* to *practical* ſubjects. We can find no connection between them, no agreement, no conſiſtency: But is this all? If ſo, then there might ſtill remain a doubt whether there may not be a conſiſtency that eſcapes indeed our obſervation,

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but what may be very well underſtood by beings of higher faculties. Thus it would be, if our perceptions in this caſe were merely negative, as the author repreſents them to be. But they are more than ſo: we not only cannot diſcern a conſiſtency, but we plainly diſcern an inconſiſtency, as manifeſt a one as between any other two contraries whatſoever. And when we have ſo clear a perception, we may ſafely pronounce, that no beings, of whatever *faculties*, can diſcern things to be otherwiſe than what we ſee them. To ſay the contrary, would be to make truth merely relative to perception: and ſo what is truth to one rational being, may be falſhood to another.

THE author's concluſion from this ſort of reaſoning is what, I imagine, few people will come into; *viz. That if upon ſuppoſition of freedom, the evidence of religion be concluſive, it remains ſo upon ſuppoſition of neceſſity.* ---The beſt evidence of real religion is mens capacity for it: but the notion of neceſſity removes that capacity, and conſequently is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the evidence of religion. And does not the author himſelf immediately ſhew this in his explication of that phraſe, *not applicable to practical ſubjects*; i. e. *with reſpect to them, is as if it were not true?* Here, if I may put in my *id eſt*, neceſſity and practice are quite inconſiſtent things; practice, whether of common life or in religion.---Had this been obſerved,

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the author had not been put to the needleſs trouble of freeing himſelf from the charge of reflecting upon reaſon. And the manner in which he does it will appear ſingular to ſome. He ſays, he does not reflect upon *reaſon*, but what is *unreaſonable*. *For to pretend to act upon reaſon, in oppoſition to practical principles, which the author of our nature gave us to act upon*---is unreaſonable. A Fataliſt will not pretend to any thing of this ſort; nor can he ſo much as underſtand the language. He ſays, every thing and every mode of every thing, is neceſſarily what it is; what conception then can ſuch a one have of an *author of nature's* giving us *practical principles to act upon*; or how can he conceive that we can act *in oppoſition to theſe principles*, or let it alone, under the real or pretended influence of reaſon? This firſt *pretence* is what neither any Fataliſt nor any other perſon will ever make. And the ſecond, which immediately follows, is no better grounded than the firſt. *And to pretend to apply our reaſon to ſubjects with regard to which our own ſhort views, and even our experience will ſhew us, it cannot be depended upon, and ſuch at beſt the ſubject of neceſſity muſt be, is*----- Surely we have *view and experience* enough to ſee thro' the notion of *neceſſity?* He ſays, *we cannot apply our reaſon to the ſubject----of neceſſity*, meaning ſo as to reconcile *neceſſity with practice*. And it would be ſtrange if we could. But I imagine we

we can do what is a great deal better; and may ſee with ſufficient clearneſs the total and abſolute *irreconcilableneſs* of them.

What immediately follows will, I am afraid, be reckoned as little to the purpoſe----

Page 111. *But this is not all; for we find within ourſelves a will, and are conſcious of a character.* ---- The notion of a moral character is equally every where irreconcilable with *neceſſity* both in God and man. The word *will* is uſed here in a ſingular manner. At firſt ſight, one would think that by *will* and *character* were meant different things; but in the note we are told they ſtand for the ſame thing; and ſo *will* is the ſame as *character*, *temper*, *taſte*, &c. But this by the by. The author goes on:

The author of nature then being certainly of ſome character or other, notwithſtanding neceſſity----Does the word *character* ſtand here for the ſame idea as when applied to men? It implies then will and choice, merit or demerit, amiable or deteſtable----And is not all this flatly contrary to *neceſſity?*

Well: but upon ſuppoſition of neceſſity, the ſupream being may as well be *true* as *falſe*, *juſt* as *unjuſt*, *benevolent* as *cruel* --- True; and for this reaſon, which the author does not give; *viz.* becauſe *neceſſity and falſhood* are no more connected than *neceſſity and truth*, &c. That is, in plain language, neceſſity not only has nothing to do with veracity and falſhood, *&c.* but it is

evident upon the notion of neceſſity there can be no ſuch things as veracity, juſtice, benevolence, on the one hand; or falſhood, injuſtice, malevolence, on the other: for all theſe things imply thought, deliberation, choice; than which nothing can exclude neceſſity more ſtrongly. But, ſays he,

THE author of nature may as well be of the morally good character, as the contrary; *becauſe we find this neceſſity no more hinders men from being benevolent than cruel*---If men act neceſſarily, can they be, or in any propriety of language, can they be called, either *benevolent* or *cruel?* Since theſe words, and all of a like kind, *i. e.* of a moral import, moſt evidently imply deliberation, freedom, choice, and this, that when men do benevolent actions, they can do the contrary. And if this is conſiſtent with neceſſity, neceſſity is conſiſtent with liberty.

As for what follows here, an objection and an anſwer, I am afraid the moſt favourable judgment that will be made of them is, that they are a mere quibble. I ſhall not repeat either the one or the other; but only obſerve, that a Fataliſt never made the objection in any other way than only *ad hominem*; and few would give ſuch an anſwer to it. The Fataliſt denies there can be either juſtice or injuſtice any where; and he is conſiſtent. But the author can hardly be thought to be ſo, in allowing neceſſity, and yet ſuppoſing there may notwithſtanding

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ing be any ſuch thing as a morally good or evil character, whether of men or actions--- Yet he ſeems to riſe higher, and ſays, *pag.* 112. *It is moſt evident, that univerſal neceſſity, if it be reconciliable with any thing, is reconcilable with that character of the author of nature, which is the ground of religion* (*i. e.* the morally good character.) How is this ſo evident? Neceſſity is plainly reconcilable with every thing that is neceſſary: and there are ſome ſuch things. It is irreconcilable with every thing that is free, or that implies freedom: and there are, or appear to be ſome ſuch things; *viz.* the moral character, wherever it is. But then, he puts a queſtion;

Does not neceſſity deſtroy the proof that He (God) *is of that character, and conſequently the proof of religion?* It plainly deſtroys both, the thing and the evidence. But if it does not deſtroy the former, it muſt be inconceivable how it ſhould affect the latter.

THE author anſwers, *by no means*; and then gives a reaſon which few will comprehend the force of. *For we find*, ſays he (I ſuppoſe he means by experience) *that happineſs and miſery are not our fate, in any ſuch ſenſe as not to be the conſequences of our behaviour, but that they are the conſequences of it*----Some, perhaps moſt, peoples experience will contradict this, in part. But what does it ſignify, if mens behaviour is neceſſary? which it muſt be upon the no-

tion of neceſſity. If mens behaviour is not neceſſary, then neceſſity is at an end. If it is neceſſary, tho' happineſs and miſery be the conſequence of mens behaviour, they are notwithſtanding neceſſary; nay, they are for that reaſon neceſſary. He goes on with experience --- *We find God exerciſes the ſame kind of government over us, with that which a father exerciſes over his children, and a magiſtrate over his ſubjects.* True; and do not both theſe governments certainly preſuppoſe freedom in the governed? As certainly, as it is certain neither parents nor magiſtrates would pretend to exerciſe the ſame government over ſtocks and ſtones.

THE concluſion of the paragraph is equally ſurpriſing with the reſt;

Now whatever becomes of abſtract queſtions concerning liberty and neceſſity, it evidently appears to us, that veracity and juſtice muſt be the natural rule and meaſure of exerciſing this authority and government to a being who can have no competitions or interfering of intereſts with his creatures and his ſubjects. Suppoſe then the truth of neceſſity; and what notion can any one have of *veracity and juſtice?* If he can have none; then veracity and juſtice cannot be the meaſure of divine government? or at leaſt, to ſay they are, is no more than to ſay that *Phlat* and *Trat* are ſo; and much leſs can it poſſibly *appear* to us.

As for thoſe words *competitions, interfere-*

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ing of intereſts, creatures and *ſubjects*, they do all of them denote or imply freedom ſomewhere or other, and are abſolutely inconſiſtent with and contradictory to the notion of univerſal neceſſity; and conſequently upon the ſuppoſition of ſuch neceſſity, what the author ſays does *evidently appear* to us, cannot poſſibly appear at all, and the latter part of the ſentence is quite inconſiſtent with the former.

BUT he will proceed to a *more particular proof* of the obligation of religion, even allowing the opinion of neceſſity, *pag.* 112, 113. I think he ſets out but indifferently, referring to *pag.* 105, 106. to ſhew that the proof from *final cauſes* of an intelligent author of nature is not affected by the opinion of neceſſity---before conſidered. In ſhort, 'tis to ſay, that *deſign* is conſiſtent with neceſſity. He goes on;

THE author of nature *hath alſo given us a moral faculty, by which we diſtinguiſh between actions, and approve ſome as virtuous and of good deſert.* Beſides what will be ſaid upon this in the remarks on the *Diſſertation upon Virtue*, here it may be proper to obſerve, how utterly impoſſible it is, that a Fataliſt ſhould allow him that we have any ſuch faculty at all. For upon the notion of neceſſity, the judgment of the underſtanding, and the perceptions, ſentiments, dictates of this moral faculty muſt be quite inconſiſtent with each other. The Fataliſt's judgment

ment is, that all things and modes are neceſſarily what they are: for ſuch a one then to allow, notwithſtanding, this moral faculty, which perceives and judges ſuch and ſuch actions to be preferable to others in any reſpect, is quite abſurd. And the author ſhould have (I do not ſay, here proved ſuch a faculty; for that he thinks he has done elſewhere, and refers to the places; but) ſhewn how the being of ſuch a faculty is conſiſtent with the notion of neceſſity; or have ſhewn, how a Fataliſt, continuing ſuch, may yet allow of ſuch a faculty. This he does not attempt, but goes on upon the ſuppoſition of there being ſuch a faculty, and obſerves;

That this rule, or the dictates of this faculty, are laws of God----Here again; can a Fataliſt poſſibly have any notion of *laws*; and laws of *God*; and ſupported with *ſanctions*; the buſineſs of which ſanctions is to procure *obedience*; which obedience would or might otherwiſe be omitted; and may be ſo ſtill, notwithſtanding thoſe ſanctions? Every ſtep here is a downright inconſiſtency with the notion of neceſſity; the very ſame in kind as there would be in ſuppoſing laws given to brickbats---But to prove their being *laws*, he goes on thus;

Conſciouſneſs of a rule or guide of action in creatures capable of conſidering it as given them by their maker----Yes; *in creatures capable of*----But who are theſe *creatures*, upon the

the notion of neceſſity? Can a Fataliſt allow they are any where to be met with? ---- *not only raiſes a ſenſe of duty, but alſo a ſenſe of ſecurity in following it, and of danger in deviating from it*-----But is not this again quite unintelligible? for can neceſſary beings, any more than brickbats, have any notion either of *duty*, or *ſecurity*, or *danger*? But I am weary of this reaſoning-----and upon this account willingly omit taking any particular notice of the force of that reaſon; *for if every rule from him*----which ſeems to be nothing but a repetition of the aſſertion he would give a reaſon for.

HAVING propoſed this *particular proof* of religion, he goes on to obſerve;

Page 114. *That no objection from neceſſity can lie againſt it: The propoſition reaſoned from, that we have ſuch a faculty, is*, he ſays, *a matter of fact*-----Yet he cannot but know that every Fataliſt will deny his fact; and I imagine, a great many others will queſtion it, who are no Fataliſts----*The concluſion is wholly and immediately from the fact.* But if the fact be denied or queſtion'd, what becomes of the concluſion drawn from it? But how does it appear that the concluſion is well drawn? Why ſays he, *The concluſion, that God will reward----is not here drawn from its appearing to us fit that he ſhould, but from its appearing that he has told us he will---- more expreſsly and diſtinctly in the ſenſe of good and ill deſert*----How is that? He has given

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us a ſenſe that ſuch actions are of good or ill deſert, *i. e.* that they deſerve or reward or puniſhment, *i. e.* that they *ſhou'd* be rewarded or puniſhed: And hence the next ſtep is, that he *will* do it. Therefore the author muſt firſt come to, *he ſhould*, before he can come at, *he will.*

In the marginal note here, there is a conceſſion which I am glad to meet with; and, tho' expreſs'd ſomewhat cautiouſly, yet is expreſs'd as ſtrongly as cou'd well be expected. *It does not appear that moral right* (put it, virtue) *is any more relative to perception, than abſtract truth is, or that*-----Then I ſay, from hence it follows, that moral right, or virtue, is ſomething quite diſtinct from, and antecedent to our perception; and conſequently, that our perception is not what conſtitutes moral right or virtue, any more than our perception conſtitutes abſtract truth: And further, that as we may have falſe perceptions of truth, ſo we may have falſe perceptions of moral right or virtue; and may judge quite wrong concerning it, as concerning truth: And laſtly, that our ſenſe or perception of virtue, is no more our moral rule, or the criterion of virtue, than our ſpeculative perception is the criterion of truth-----Theſe, I am afraid, are hard conſequences againſt our author almoſt every where; but eſpecially in his three ſermons on *Human Nature*, and his *Diſſertation upon Virtue.*

The author having finiſh'd this *his proof* of religion from the *moral ſenſe*, goes on to obſerve

obſerve further, in oppoſition to the Fataliſt, that *natural religion has an external evidence.*--- As to which I ſhall only ſay, that any *external* evidence can in this caſe ſignify little, where the *internal* evidence is denied or queſtioned. Natural religion is what may be proved *naturally*, or not at all. Hiſtory, tradition, facts, can only coincide with, or corroborate mens own reaſoning on this head.

Page 117. he diſtinguiſhes between a *ſpeculative* and a *practical faculty of perception.* Yet, *page* 92. this *practical* faculty of perception is a *ſpeculative* faculty of perception------However here, as well as in an hundred other places, I own myſelf quite at a loſs for the meaning of that word, *practical*: But I am glad the author here allows expreſsly, that the *moral underſtanding* (in his ſermons it was *conſcience*) *may be impaired and perverted.* A conceſſion that was too much wanted in his three firſt ſermons: And upon this he cautions particularly, that we do not take *cuſtom, faſhion----for the only moral rule.* I wiſh to God, he had *here at leaſt* told us, what he would have taken for the *moral rule.* Neither in this book (not in his *diſſertation upon virtue*) nor in his ſermons, does he give any other rule than *moral underſtanding* or *conſcience*: And now we are told this rule may be a falſe rule, it may be perverted. What, in this caſe, muſt poor mortals do? Or ſuppoſing, in any caſe, a man's conſcience or moral underſtanding is perverted, how muſt it be rectified?

Further, he cautions us againſt taking *cuſtom, faſhion-----for the only moral rule:* Why, are theſe things, any or all of them, *cuſtom, faſhion, ſlight notions of honour*----any moral rule at all? Why then are we only cautioned againſt making them the *only* moral rule? And once more;

SINCE he allows the moral underſtanding may be *impaired and perverted, and its dictates not impartially attended to*; I wou'd aſk, when the moral underſtanding is perverted, are not its *dictates* wrong? Shou'd they then be *attended to* in the ſame manner as when they are right? or are we to make a difference? and by what rule? And again, when the dictates of the moral underſtandings are wrong, are they then a *law, a commandment of God?* Then in this reſpect there is no difference between *right* and *wrong* dictates: By allowing that they may be *wrong*, it is allow'd they may be contrary to, directly the reverſe of what the rule of moral right is, that is founded in the nature of things, and which the author owns to be real and antecedent to our perceptions of it. And if both notwithſtanding may come from God, or be Laws of God, then it is plain the law of God may conſiſt, will conſiſt of contraries.

THE *puzzle and obſcurity* of this chapter from end to end is (as the author himſelf ſeems to have been aware it wou'd be, *page* 104.) beyond expreſſion; and the good deſign and ten-

tendency of it is not eaſily conceived, except upon this ſuppoſition, that it is intended to ſhew, that as all appearances in the preſent courſe of things are againſt the opinion of *neceſſity*, nothing can be argued from it againſt *religion:* Yet it is plain the author takes the other method, and endeavours to ſhew, that it is *as much* conſiſtent with *religion*, as with the *natural conſtitution* of things, which appears to be doing nothing. How much better had his valuable time been ſpent in ſhewing the inconſiſtency of the notion of *neceſſity* with the conſtitution of things *directly?*

REMARKS

ON THE

Diſſertation concerning VIRTUE.

THIS diſſertation begins ſomewhat incorrectly. Pag. 309. *That which renders beings capable of moral government, is their having a moral nature, and moral faculties of perception and action.* Their having *moral faculties of perception and action*, is what conſtitutes their *moral nature*; and if the explication of theſe words, *moral nature*, was deſired, I imagine it cou'd not be done better than by ſaying, *moral faculties*, or more diſtinctly, *faculties of perception and action*, are what conſtitute a *moral nature*; an *id eſt* therefore here had been much better than *and*. The taking notice of this in a philoſophical diſſertation, will not perhaps be reckon'd too minute.

BUT it is of much greater moment to recommend it to our author to conſider, how it is poſſible that a *neceſſary* being can be capable

pable of moral government; ſince it is plain, ſuch a one has not a *moral nature*, i. e. he has not the *faculties of perception and action*. If this is queſtion'd, let it be conſider'd, whether a power of *acting*, does not imply a power of letting it alone. And if a power of acting, or not acting, is what a *neceſſary* being may have, then *neceſſity* and *liberty* are, if not the ſame idea, yet perfectly conſiſtent with each other: And it is certain that the author himſelf preſently after, *page* 311. acknowledges, that *will and deſign conſtitute the very nature of actions as ſuch*. Hence it follows, either that *neceſſary* beings are not capable of *action*, or that they are capable of *will and deſign:* And then it will follow again, upon the latter ſuppoſition, that there is no difference between *free* and *neceſſary* beings: for was a definition of a *free* being required, a better cou'd not be eaſily thought of than that, *viz.* a *being capable of acting from will and deſign*.

THE author having obſerved, that we have a *moral approving and diſapproving faculty*, which may be called *conſcience*, *moral reaſon*, *moral ſenſe*, or *divine reaſon*; and that it may be conſidered as a *ſentiment of the underſtanding*, *or as a perception of the heart* (invert the expreſſion, and it will be righter, a *perception of the underſtanding*, and a *ſentiment of the heart*; and yet ſtill it will not be exact: for a *faculty* is not the ſame thing with an *act*, nor ſhou'd be ſo conſidered) *or*, *which ſeems the truth*,

truth, as including both: He goes on then to make ſome obſervations concerning this moral faculty. And,

First, he ſays, *pag.* 311. that *actions are the object, and the only one, of the approving and diſapproving faculty:* And preſently adds, *Intention indeed of ſuch and ſuch conſequences of action is always included; for it is a part of the action itſelf.* He is at liberty, no queſtion, to uſe the word *action*, and include as much or as little in it as he pleaſes; giving notice of it. But one may ask, what if ſuch an action be done, and none of the conſequences of it, good or bad, intended; does *the moral faculty* diſcern it to be good or bad? If he ſays neither, then it will be plain, that it is the temper, the intention of actions, or the view, the motive from whence they proceed, that is the object of the moral faculty of appprobation or diſapprobation, and not the action. Thus, if one man give a ſhilling to a poor body from a benevolent, compaſſionate temper; another from vanity, ambition ------ the moral ſenſe approves the one, diſapproves the other, tho' the action be the ſame.

He ſays, *Tho' the intended good or bad conſequence does not follow, we have exactly the ſame ſenſe of the action as if they* (it) *did.* And if the conſequences, good or bad, *do follow*, if they were not intended, the moral ſenſe can neither approve nor diſapprove one jot more upon that account. Therefore again,

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it is the principle, the temper, the intention, that is the object of approbation or diſapprobation, and not the action.

Page 312. In his obſervations here concerning our perception of good or ill deſert, he ſays, *That the former is very weak, with reſpect to common inſtances of virtue: one reaſon of which may be, that it does not appear---- how far ſuch inſtances of virtue proceed from a virtuous principle*-------Hence it is plain again, that even according to himſelf, not the action, but the principle, is the object of the moral faculty.

In the next obſervation concerning the moral ſenſe, he ſays, *page* 313. *Our perception of vice and ill-deſert ariſes from, and is the reſult of a compariſon of actions with the nature and capacities of the agent.* Now theſe ſure are no part of the action; much leſs a *compariſon* of them with the action, any part of the action; therefore ſomething elſe beſides action is the object of the moral ſenſe. This he illuſtrates by an inſtance and compariſon of harm done by *ideots*, *madmen*, or *children*, and by men of *mature underſtanding*; of which harm every one has a *different ſenſe*, he ſays; *tho' the action itſelf, including the intention, which is part of the action, be the ſame*; *as*, he ſays, *it may be.* But this I wonder at: So far as they are *ideots* and *madmen*, they can have no intention; and ſo far as they are capable of *intention*, ſo far they are criminal; but neither *ideots* nor *madmen*.

UNDER his fourth obſervation, the author inquires, *page* 314. *Whether men are more at liberty in point of morals to make themſelves miſerable without reaſon, than to make other people ſo* ---- One would think this is plain enough, *viz.* that they are not. Men can never make themſelves miſerable *with reaſon*; whenever they do ſo, it muſt be not only *without*, but likewiſe *contrary to reaſon*. And as acting reaſonably muſt in all beings be virtuous and commendable; ſo acting unreaſonably, *i. e.* without, or contrary to reaſon, muſt in all beings be vicious and blame-worthy. If there is a reaſon, equally good, for mens conſulting their own intereſt and happineſs, as for promoting the intereſt of one another, they are in point of virtue equally obliged to both; and on the other hand, are equally criminal in the neglect of either. The author is of the ſame ſentiment, and endeavouring to prove it from ſeveral conſiderations, he concludes thus; *pag.* 315. *From theſe things it appears, that prudence is a ſpecies of virtue, and folly of vice*; which makes it ſomewhat ſtrange, that he ſhould immediately after ſo *willingly*, as he does, *pag.* 316. *give up the words, virtue and vice, as not applicable to prudence and folly*; and yet, which is ſomewhat ſtranger, at the ſame time *inſiſt*, that the moral faculty *approves of prudent actions, and diſapproves imprudent ones*: for this is *in him* the ſtrongeſt manner of ſaying, that *virtue* and *vice* muſt neceſſarily be applied to prudence and folly.

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BUT perhaps it will be worth while, and we ought to remark here further, that tho' all virtue ſhou'd be ſummed up in acting for a common good, all vice in the contrary; yet prudence and folly will neceſſarily be ranked among the virtues and vices, as the one inlarges the capacity of a member of ſociety, and conſequently the public intereſt; and the other operates the contrary way, and leſſens both. And in this particular view it is, that we ſay prudence is virtuous, folly vicious.

Page 316. Under the fifth obſervation (which is by much the moſt important, and will deſerve to be carefully attended to) the author ſays, *That without enquiring how far and in what ſenſe virtue is reſolvable into benevolence, and vice into the want of it; it may be proper to obſerve, that benevolence and the want of it, ſingly conſider'd, are in no ſort the whole of virtue and vice* ----- Not to take notice of the language, which is not exact, I wou'd ask, whether there is any aſſignable virtue that does not proceed from a benevolent principle; or any vice that does not proceed from the want or defectiveneſs of that principle, or from its contrary, malevolence. If the author can aſſign none, then he ought to allow, that the whole of virtue is reſolvable into benevolence, the whole of vice into the want or defectiveneſs of benevolence, or into its contrary, malevolence.

AND whereas he ſays, that *juſtice* and *veracity* muſt be allow'd to be virtues, as well

as benevolence; and benevolence itſelf is no virtue, but within the bounds of juſtice and veracity; I wou'd inquire further (whatever he means by theſe words,and it were to be wiſh'd he had ſomewhere defined them; however I inquire, let him mean what he pleaſes by them, or taking them in the common ſenſe) are *juſtice* and *veracity*, when practis'd from any other principle but a benevolent one, any virtue? or, is any action according to juſtice and veracity virtuous, except in juſt ſo far as it proceeds from a benevolent principle? He can eaſily conceive ſeveral other principles from whence a ſeries of conduct according to juſtice and veracity may proceed: Now in any ſuch caſe will he call a man's conduct virtuous? I appeal to his *moral ſenſe*. Whatever materially virtuous action does not proceed from a love to our fellow-creatures, the moral ſenſe (the human underſtanding) does not approve of it: No man approves of it, and it is no virtue.

And whereas he ſays that benevolence, the exerciſe of it, muſt be reſtrain'd within the bounds of veracity and juſtice, I wou'd ask his reaſon for it; or whether he can aſſign any other, than that the intereſt, the happineſs of mankind, will be conſulted the moſt effectually and extenſively in this way; and conſequently, whether thoſe virtues of veracity and juſtice will not be regarded even from the very principle of benevolence? And hence it will follow, that the practice of thoſe virtues (when

(when and wherever they are virtues) is and can be no reſtraint upon benevolence.

But may not benevolence ſometimes put men upon doing vicious actions? No, ſure: If benevolence itſelf will lead men to act within the limits of juſtice and veracity, *i. e.* ſo as never to contradict either of them, but to give the utmoſt ſcope to themſelves within thoſe bounds. And, let it be obſerved, theſe bounds are fixed even by benevolence itſelf, guided by reaſon, *i. e.* reaſon finds out theſe limits, and benevolence prompts men to obſerve them; becauſe it is very eaſy for any man to ſee that this is the only way effectually to ſecure, and to carry up to the higheſt degree, the happineſs of mankind; and that the miſery of the world muſt be in proportion to the neglect and violation of juſtice and truth. Therefore the benevolent principle will be always a ſecurity for mens acting according to, and always within the bounds of juſtice and truth.

Let us now ſee what the author ſays, *Why benevolence, and the want of it* (add the contrary temper, malevolence) *are in no ſort the whole of virtue and vice: For if this were the caſe*, ſays he, *in the review of one's own character, or that of others, our moral underſtanding and moral ſenſe* (why both? would not one of theſe have done?) *wou'd be indifferent to every thing, but the degrees in which benevolence prevailed, and the degrees in which it was wanting:* And he explains himſelf further;

That is, ſays he, *we ſhould neither approve of benevolence to ſome perſons rather than others, nor diſapprove injuſtice and falſhood upon any other account, than merely as an overballance of happineſs was foreſeen likely to be produced by the firſt, and miſery by the ſecond.*

WHATEVER other reaſon he may poſſibly aſſign for the practice of juſtice and veracity, than the good, the happineſs of mankind; yet he muſt own, I think, that the good, the happineſs of mankind, cannot be ſo effectually ſecured and promoted, as by acting according to, or within the limits of juſtice and veracity; and conſequently, that a principle of benevolence will induce men to act accordingly within thoſe limits; and not in a confuſed, undiſtinguiſhing or partial manner. And if benevolence will account thoroughly for the practice of thoſe virtues, and even thoſe virtues (as was juſt obſerv'd) are no virtues (in his own ſenſe) but when practis'd from a benevolent principle, then benevolence plainly is the ſum of virtue; and it will be no error in the *moral ſenſe* to be indifferent to every thing elſe as virtue, but benevolence.

THE author however thinks otherwiſe, and therefore goes on; *But now, on the contrary, ſuppoſe two men competitors for any thing whatever, which wou'd be of equal advantage to each of 'em ----- to prefer a friend or benefactor, or get ſuch a one preferr'd, wou'd*

wou'd be virtue, abſtracted from all conſideration of diſtant conſequences; as, that examples of gratitude ----- wou'd be of general good to the world.

THIS caſe ſurely is very crudely put, if we take the expreſſion in the common obvious manner; and I ſhall venture to ſay, that it is ſo far from being always virtue to prefer a friend or benefactor, that it may be perfectly wrong and vicious; particularly in the caſe of incapacity, unfitneſs to diſcharge the duties of the place in competition, or even *leſs* capacity ---- But allow his caſe as he puts it, I ſhou'd be glad to know his reaſon why it is virtue to prefer a friend to another; ſince he ſets aſide ſo expreſsly the good of the world, ariſing from examples of gratitude, cultivation of friendſhip ----- If he excuſes himſelf from aſſigning any other (as I believe he will) than only the determination or approbation of his *moral ſenſe*, I believe the fact will be queſtion'd, and that moral ſenſe will determine no ſuch thing where it is in its right ſtate, and not perverted (a manner of ſpeaking which the author will allow of.)

AFTER this, he puts two other caſes, and both of them, as it ſhould ſeem, impoſſible ones, and therefore nothing can follow from them; or, if they are poſſible, I think he has determined wrong concerning them. They ſeem both to relate to *property*; and if the author can find any other ground for the rules with which it is guarded, than only or merely the

the good of ſociety, he will much oblige the world with the diſcovery. And I cannot but wonder at the author's poſitive manner of concluding from the caſes he puts, without any the leaſt ſhadow of reaſon ariſing from thoſe caſes: *The fact then appears to be, that we are ſo conſtituted as to condemn falſhood, unprovoked violence, injuſtice; and to approve of benevolence to ſome preferably to others, abſtracted from all conſideration, which conduct is likelieſt to produce an over-ballance of happineſs or miſery.*

HERE I cannot but with ſome little warmth ask, how does it appear that *this is the fact*? from any thing he has ſaid? He has poſitively determined, This is virtue, *viz.* the preferring a friend to another: This is vicious, *viz.* fraud, or violence, or injuſtice (as it ſhou'd ſeem, relating to property; but he never defines them;) and from hence it is plain *fact*, that we *are ſo and ſo conſtituted.*

Page 317. The inference from theſe *obſervations* is ſurely very remarkable: *And therefore were the author of nature to propoſe nothing as an end, but the production of happineſs; were his moral character nothing but that of benevolence, yet our's is not ſo*------One would think the *moral character* muſt be the ſame in all beings whatever; whether of finite or infinite rational powers. One cannot conceive that this ſhou'd make any difference of the *moral character*: If *benevolence* is the moral character of the ſupreme being, it muſt be in itſelf

itſelf right, and the moſt perfect moral character. And why may it not be the moral character of inferior beings; men in particular? Can there be a better pattern and exemplar? Well, but in *fact* we are otherwiſe conſtituted; our *moral ſenſe* approves of diſtinguiſhing benevolence, benevolence to a friend, a benefactor, preferably to an enemy or ſtranger; and condemns benevolence exerciſed in the way of falſhood, violence, injuſtice. And is not the divine benevolence the ſame diſtinguiſhing benevolence? If his mercies are over all his works, and he *is good to the unthankful and the evil*; yet is not he *more* benevolent to the good and thankful? and is not his benevolence, again, in the exerciſe of it perfectly kept within the bounds of truth and juſtice; ſo as not to offend in any caſe againſt either? and is it not, laſtly, ſo much the more perfect and complete on that very account? And,

WHEREAS the author allows, *That if benevolence is the moral character of the Deity, the only reaſon of his giving the above-mention'd approbation of benevolence to ſomeperſons rather than others, and diſapprobation of falſhood, violence, injuſtice, muſt be, that he foreſaw this conſtitution of our nature wou'd produce more happineſs than framing us with a temper of mere general benevolence:* It may be again obſerved, that mere *general* (by which is meant *undiſtinguiſhing*) benevolence is not the moral character of the Deity. But I obſerve further,

ther, that the author muſt own, that in this way of exerciſing benevolence, *viz.* diſtinguiſhing between perſons, and never pretending to do good, contrary to juſtice and veracity, the greateſt good will be done, the greateſt happineſs will be produced. Hence it follows, that the production of happineſs may be the only end of *human* conduct, as well as of *divine*; and his exceptions are really and at the bottom none at all; and what the author ſays immediately after this conceſſion muſt ſurely be reckoned quite inconſiſtent with it.

But ſtill, ſince this is our conſtitution, falſhood, violence, injuſtice muſt be vice in us, and benevolence to ſome preferably to others virtue; abſtracted from all conſideration of the over-ballance of evil or good, which they may appear likely to produce. I hope there are other reaſons beſides that of our *conſtitution* (in the author's ſenſe of the word) againſt falſhood, violence injuſtice, and for diſtinguiſhing benevolence ---- but this by the way. What I moſt wonder at here, is, that he can abſtract the conſideration of evil and good to be produced by that particular manner of exerciſing benevolence which our *conſtitution* directs, when yet he had immediately before granted, that our *conſtitution* was ſo formed, on purpoſe to produce the greateſt poſſible happineſs, or a greater happineſs than cou'd be produced any other way. This he ſaid indeed only upon the ſuppoſition, that *benevolence was the moral cha-*

character of the Deity; but as he does not find fault with the ſuppoſition, he cannot diſlike the neceſſary conſequence of it.

Page 318. the author comes at laſt to the reaſon of his inlarging ſo much under this *fifth obſervation*, viz. *becauſe ſome authors of great and diſtinguiſhed merit have expreſſed themſelves in a manner which may occaſion ſome danger to careleſs readers, of imagining the whole of virtue to conſiſt in ſingly aiming, according to the beſt of their judgment, at promoting the happineſs of mankind in the preſent ſtate* (why theſe words, *in the preſent ſtate?* either they have no meaning, or an invidious one) *and the whole of vice in doing what they foreſee or might* (may) *foreſee is likely to produce an overballance of unhappineſs in it*; *than which miſtakes*, he ſays, *none can be conceived more terrible.* On the contrary, I reckon this is a mere fright, becauſe I cannot ſee how it is poſſible that any bad conſequences can ariſe from people's acting benevolently, or for a public good, *according to the beſt of their judgment.* But may not they act benevolently, contrary to *juſtice* and *veracity*? What, tho' they act benevolently only *according to the beſt of their judgment*? Surely, the *beſt* of any common man's judgment will direct him to act benevolently *within* the bounds of veracity and juſtice, *i. e.* ſo as never to contradict either of theſe virtues. For if ſuch a one exerciſes the *beſt* of his judgment, he muſt ſee, that if he does not obſerve this manner of acting

benevolently, he ſhall be liable, upon the whole, to do far more hurt than good; or he muſt ſee, that if he is good to ſome, but at the ſame time unjuſt, falſe, violent, oppreſſive to others, his behaviour is abſurd and contradictory; one would think theſe things muſt lie level to any man's judgment.

And ſince theſe are the only bounds which our author himſelf wou'd have ſet to benevolence; every man that acts benevolently *according to the beſt of his judgment*, muſt perfectly agree with our author, and our author with him, and no bad conſequences can ariſe from this man's acting, but what the author's own notions are liable to.

Well, but notwithſtanding, *it is certain*, as he goes on, *that ſome of the moſt ſhocking inſtances of injuſtice, adultery, murder, perjury, and even perſecution, may, in many ſuppoſable caſes, not have the appearance of being likely to produce an over-ballance of miſery----- perhaps, ſometimes may have the contrary appearance*----But he checks himſelf in this career; and moſt readers, I imagine, will think there was reaſon to do ſo; and that it might have been done in another manner-----*This reflection might eaſily be carried on, but I forbear.*

Let me ask here again, how it can be thought that a man acting benevolently *according to the beſt of his judgment*, can be led by that principle, under ſuch direction, to injuſtice, murder, adultery?----Or is it not plain, that

that if ever any of theſe vices are practiſed, when there is a *benevolent* principle, yet there is at the ſame time a defect of that principle, together with great ſhort-ſightedneſs and partiality, and ſome other motive of action quite different from, and even contrary to, in a degree inconſiſtent with kind affection? And does not the author himſelf plainly ſee, ſuppoſe, and acknowlege this quickly after? when he ſays,

Page 319. *But the truth ſeems to be, that ſuch ſuppoſed endeavours proceed almoſt always* (why not quite *always?) from ambition, the ſpirit of party, or ſome indirect principle*--- therefore not from *benevolence*, and much leſs from benevolence exerciſed *according to the beſt of mens judgments.*

And whereas in his black liſt he mentions laſt of all *perſecution*, and as the worſt of all, *and even perſecution*; if he pleaſes but to reflect a little upon what he has ſaid (in his three firſt ſermons eſpecially) concerning *conſcience*, he will find his own notions are much more liable to this *terribly* bad conſequence, than their's againſt whom he is here arguing.

But of all things I am moſt ſurpriz'd, and indeed amaz'd, at that aſſertion which follows here, *page* 118. *The happineſs of the world is the concern of him who is the Lord and proprietor of it* ----- I am amaz'd at this reflection, becauſe in the author's manner of making it, it looks as if it was the concern of God, excluſive of every one elſe; where-

as one wou'd think, on the contrary, that if the *happineſs* of the world was the view, the end which God propos'd to himſelf, it ſhou'd for that *very* reaſon be the *concern* of men likewiſe. *Be ye therefore perfect*, ſaid our Saviour to his followers, or *merciful*; becauſe, and as *your father which is in heaven is perfect*, or *is merciful.* And ſaid the apoſtle to his converts, *Be ye therefore followers* (imitators) *of God, as dear children; and walk in love.*

WHAT follows here is ſo far from the purpoſe, that one hardly knows how to forbear ſaying it is quite impertinent: *Nor do we know what we are about, when we endeavour to promote the good of mankind in any ways but thoſe which he has appointed; that is, indeed in all ways not contrary to juſtice and veracity.* How can this be pertinent, when, as was ſaid before, a man that acts benevolently only according to the *beſt of his judgment*, will not act contrary to *juſtice* and *veracity?* for ſurely, the *beſt* of any man's judgment will inform him, eaſily and plainly, that upon the whole, not only as much, but far more miſchief will be done, than good, if men do not confine their benevolence within theſe bounds.

AND whereas the author ſpeaks of doing good only *within thoſe ways which God hath appointed*, I wou'd ſuppoſe he means (and ſurely he can mean nothing elſe) appointed by the light of nature, or in the nature and reaſon

ſon of things: Now theſe are plainly to be gather'd by the due exerciſe of mens own judgments; and a man who acts benevolently according to the *beſt of his judgment*, will for that reaſon act benevolently *within the ways which God has appointed.*

AND from hence I conclude, that neither the author nor any one elſe, can ſhew the leaſt bad tendency or conſequence of that opinion; "That acting benevolently, according to the "beſt of mens judgment, is the foundation "and the ſum of morals." Or it may be expreſs'd in the author's own language; * *That mankind is a community, that we ſtand in a relation to each other, that there is a publick intereſt of ſociety which each particular is obliged to promote, is the ſum of morals.*

HAVING thus gone thro' the *diſſertation*, it will be proper to take a review of it, in order to obſerve ſome things omitted or too ſlightly taken notice of in the preceding *Remarks*. It is intitled, *Of the Nature of Virtue*. One would therefore reaſonably expect it ſhould tell us what is the *nature of virtue*; that this ſhould be the principal thing aimed at in this diſſertation; and that any one upon peruſing it with any care ſhould be able to ſay what it is, according to the opinion of this author. This is the very *leaſt* that might be expected; for in a diſſertation profeſſedly written, whether upon this or any other ſubject, it might be reckoned very fitting, that

* *Sermons*, p. 161.

the

the author ſhould not only give us his notion of the ſubject of which he treats, but likewiſe ſupport his notion with the beſt arguments he can think of.

I DOUBT our author has done neither of theſe; for tho' I have read this diſſertation of his with care (let me add, the whole book, and his three ſermons *upon human nature)* I am quite in the dark concerning *his* notion of virtue; as much ſo as if I had never read a tittle of his upon this ſubject; and I find it is the ſame with other readers.

WE are told indeed, *page* 310. *there is an univerſally acknowledged ſtandard of it.* It is ſomewhat remarkable, that the author ſhould ſay this, and yet own in the very ſame ſentence, that *it has been much diſputed wherein virtue conſiſts.* Thoſe that cannot agree *wherein virtue conſiſts*, cannot agree in a *ſtandard of it*; and then there cannot be *an univerſally acknowledged ſtandard of it.* All that theſe diſputants can agree about, is, that there muſt be *a ſtandard* of it, whatever it is. And the author ſhou'd have expreſſed himſelf accordingly; that whatever diſputes there are and have been about the nature of virtue, it is univerſally acknowledged however, *that there is in reality a Standard of it.* Some of theſe diſputants have given one *ſtandard* (or one general notion or criterion) ſome another; ſome a third----It might be juſtly expected, that our author ſhou'd have given us *his ſtandard* (or have told us what in his judgment is the

the *ſtandard*) here at leaſt, and at laſt: for in the *Analogy* he often hints at this *ſtandard*, upon a variety of occaſions, but never explicitly ſaying what it is; I hoped, at leaſt, to find it in a diſſertation profeſſedly written upon the ſubject. Indeed, ſometimes even in the *Analogy*, he ſpeaks of virtue as founded in the *nature and reaſon of things*; ſometimes he ſpeaks of a moral fitneſs of action, antecedent to, and independent of all will, even the divine: But all theſe, and ſuch like manners of ſpeaking, ſeemed too indeterminate, and ſerved only to quicken my deſire and hope of ſeeing ſomething more plain and explicit upon this head in the *diſſertation*.

YET, to my great diſappointment, I have found nothing to this purpoſe, in the leaſt; for I preſume, tho' the author immediately after mentioning that there is ſuch a ſtandard, goes on thus: *It* (virtue) *is that which all ages and all countries have made profeſſion of in publick; it is that which every man you meet puts on the ſhew of; it is that which the primary and fundamental laws of all civil conſtitutions over the face of the earth make it their buſineſs and endeavour to enforce the practice of upon mankind; namely, juſtice, veracity and regard to common good*: he did not intend this for any explication of virtue. And indeed theſe obſervations, every one of them, it ſhou'd ſeem, except one, are more proper for a popular diſcourſe, than a philoſophical diſſertation upon virtue.

AND

AND tho' here, and in many other places both of this diſſertation and the *Analogy*, he mentions theſe three virtues, *juſtice*, *veracity*, and *regard to common good* (or benevolence) and apparently reduces all virtue to theſe particulars, he no where any more explains or defines them, than he explains or defines virtue in general. The meaning of which conduct I am quite at a loſs for; eſpecially when I conſider, and verily believe, there are few men better qualified to deal explicitly upon this head than this author.

BUT it will certainly be asked, what is it then the author has done in this diſſertation upon the *nature of virtue?* He does not tell us, it ſeems, what is the *nature* of it at all; does he ſay nothing about it, and ſo quite miſtake the deſign and title of his own diſſertation? Not ſo: At the firſt ſetting out he obſerves what is plain matter of fact, that men have a *faculty* by which they judge of virtue, and approve ſome actions, and diſapprove others: but take it in his own words; Page 309. *We have a capacity of reflecting upon actions and characters, and making them an object to our thought; and on doing this, we naturally and unavoidably approve ſome actions under the peculiar view of their being virtuous, and of good deſert, and condemn others as vicious, and of ill deſert. That we have this moral approving and diſapproving* * *faculty, is cer-*

* The author here in a marginal note tells us, *that this way of ſpeaking is taken from* Epictetus: And indeed it is true, that *Epictetus* uſes theſe two epithets, Δοκιμαστικὴ and Ἀποδοκιμαστικὴ: but

certain from ---- Having laid this down for matter of fact, and ſtrengthened the obſervation by other plain matters of fact, which ſuppoſe

but that he applies them in the manner our author does, or had any notion of a *moral faculty*, as at all diſtinct from the faculty of *reaſon*, does by no means appear; I think the contrary is plain. He ſays men have a *faculty* which can ſurvey even itſelf, and all other things, and is either δοκιμαστικὴ, or ἀποδοκιμαστικὴ. And what is this faculty? It is reaſon, he ſays; ἡ δύναμις ἡ λογικὴ: That by this δύναμις λογικὴ, he means *reaſon*, or the rational faculty, may plainly appear from the inſtances he mentions immediately. Suppoſe, ſays he, a man has acquired a skill in grammar or muſick, the one will teach him *how* to write, ſuppoſe, to a friend; the other *how* to ſing, or play upon an inſtrument; but neither of theſe arts will teach him whether it is *now* a proper time to write to his friend, or whether he ſhould *now* ſing and play, or not; it is *reaſon* only that can tell him that. It is by this faculty he judges of all *external* things, and finding them to be quite out of his power, he governs himſelf accordingly, and neither deſires the good, nor is averſe to the evil (meaning by good and evil what are uſually ſo eſteemed) and conſequently in all caſes and events preſerves an exact æquilibrium and tranquillity of mind. And it ſeems to me, that according to *Epictetus*, the Δύναμις λογικὴ is δοκιμαστικὴ, when it is employed about the τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and determines theſe to be the only proper objects of our attention and endeavours; and on the other hand, is ἀποδοκιμαστικὴ when it ſurveys the τὰ οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, and judges that we have no proper concern at all with them. As for what *Epictetus* means by the τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν and the τὰ οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, he particularly tells us, that in the beginning of the *Enchiridion*, what is here ſaid is propoſed as the moſt probable interpretation of thoſe two epithets, as uſed by *Epictetus*.

But how does this author underſtand and apply them?

The moral faculty, ſays he, *may be underſtood to have theſe two epithets upon a double account, becauſe upon a ſurvey of actions ------ it determines them to be good or evil*; this is the firſt account. Now I ſhou'd think, that had *Epictetus* meant a *moral faculty*, in our author's ſenſe, and applied two ſuch epithets to it, he wou'd not have illuſtrated his meaning in the manner he does, and mentioned two or three actions immediately, the morality of which it will be exceeding hard to find out; it certainly is evaneſcent or moſt nearly approaching to none at all. But if we underſtand him to ſpeak of the

ſuppoſe or depend upon it; he then ſpends the remainder of this diſſertation in making four or five obſervations upon this faculty: Concerning which obſervations I ſay, that he does not in any one of them ſo much as mention, much leſs attempt to explain, what is that thing or quality in actions, on account of which our moral faculty approves of ſome, and denominates them virtuous, and of good deſert; and diſapproves of others as vicious, and of ill deſert: or in other words, he does not in the leaſt ſignify to us what is the ground and reaſon of the different judgments we make of different actions; or tell us, ſince ſome actions are virtuous, ſeen to be ſo, and approved by the *moral faculty*; others vicious, ſeen to be ſo, and diſapproved by the ſame faculty; what it is in the actions themſelves, that occaſions, or rather anſwers to, and is the ground of this different judgment concerning them.

Now this omiſſion in a diſſertation profeſſedly written upon the ſubject, muſt needs ſurprize, and in a degree offend every one that reads it. Surely the author muſt own, that there is a real, abſolute difference of

faculty of *reaſon*, what he ſays is perfectly eaſy and intelligible, and his inſtances are as much to the purpoſe as any other he cou'd mention.

And as for the other *account*, upon which theſe two epithets are applied to the *moral faculty*, viz. *becauſe it determines itſelf to be the guide of action and of life in contradiſtinction from all other faculties, or natural principles of action*: This is equally true of the principle of *reaſon*, and *Epictetus*'s Δύναμις λογικὴ is moſt fitly, properly and neceſſarily underſtood to mean *that*, till it can be ſome *other way* ſhewn (which will hardly be) that *Epictetus* knew any thing of our author's *moral faculty*.

actions

actions quite distinct from and antecedent to all perception, and every judgment that is made of them; otherwise it is our perception and judgment that makes the difference, than which there cannot be a greater or more intolerable absurdity. As a circle and a square are what they are, and different from each other, whether their properties or their differences are attended to or not; so a virtuous and a vicious action are what they are, and essentially different from each other, whether the nature of each, or the differences of them be attended to, perceived and judged of by any mind whatever.

The author, undoubtedly, will own this; he does as good as acknowledge it in variety of passages; especially, in the *Analogy*. I make no question upon this head.

But what I very much doubt is this, whether he will own that the *moral faculty*, when it ranks actions under the distinct heads of *virtuous* and *vicious*, and approves of some, and disapproves of others; whether the *moral faculty*, in this exercise of it, always discerns the true ground and reason of this distinction, and makes the distinction upon that ground and reason only, or even at all; or whether it does not operate, or (to express it perhaps more properly) whether its operation is not as that of an *instinct*, which distinguishes, and accepts or rejects necessarily, without any attention to, or preception of the grounds and reasons of such distinction.

This latter, all things considered, I in-

cline to think is the author's ſentiment; for there are many things, both in this performance, and in his *ſermons*, that cannot well be accounted for upon any other ſuppoſition; and particularly, I cannot account otherwiſe for his *conſtant* avoiding to ſay what thoſe reaſons are, for, or on account of which the *moral faculty* diſtinguiſhes actions ſo and ſo.

NOR is this all, for he ſeems to inſinuate, that tho' there is indeed a *ſtandard* of virtue, yet the *moral faculty* may judge of actions in the moral way without it. This he appears to do very plainly in his ſermons, *page* 48. where he ſays, *that men have the rule of right within them*; and that tho' *the inquiries which have been made by men of leiſure after ſome general rule, the conformity to or diſagreement from which ſhould denominate our actions good or evil, are in many reſpects of great ſervice: yet*, adds he, *let any plain honeſt man, before he engages in any courſe of action, ask himſelf, Is this I am going about right, or is it wrong? is it good, or is it evil? I do not in the leaſt doubt but this queſtion wou'd be anſwered agreeably to truth and virtue, by almoſt any fair man, in almoſt any circumſtance.*

I THINK this paſſage ſufficiently proves what I bring it for, *viz.* that according to this author's ſentiment, the *moral faculty* is capable of determining what actions are virtuous, and what are vicious, without knowing any thing of the *ſtandard* of virtue or vice, or without attending to or knowing any thing

thing of any general notion or rule, by a conformity to or diſagreement with which we can denominate an action virtuous or vicious, *i. e.* in other words, without knowing at all what is virtue and what is vice: In the ſame manner as a perſon may ſay, and ſay truly, ſuch a figure is a triangle, or ſuch a one is a ſquare (upon having theſe figures ſet before him) without knowing at all what a triangle or ſquare is; that is, he may gueſs and ſpeak according to the truth, and rank theſe figures under the true general heads, tho' he does not know at all what the truth is.

THIS appears plainly to be the author's ſentiment, that the *moral faculty*, conſcience, or the moral underſtanding, is the rule of right within men; that the dictates of this faculty are laws, laws of God in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, accompanied with the moſt explicit ſanctions; and that by this rule men may determine what is virtue, what is vice; or concerning actions, which are virtuous and right, and which are vicious and wrong; without having any notion of virtue and vice, of rightneſs and wrongneſs, or knowing any thing at all of a general ſtandard, notion, rule, criterion or idea of virtue and vice, of virtuous and right, of vicious and wrong actions. This, I ſay, is the author's ſentiment; for which reaſon it is, that he not only every where declines giving any general ſtandard, rule, notion, criterion or idea of virtue; but in his ſermons and the paſſage cited, repreſents it as a thing, tho' in many reſpects uſeful, yet by

no means neceſſary; and what therefore is proper to be ſearched after and found out at *leiſure*, only by men that have a great deal.

But now, if it be asked, is this *moral faculty* a *certain* rule? are its determinations infallible, or certain always to be agreeable to the truth of things, tho' that truth is often, and may in any caſe be ſuppoſed to be unknown? Will a man by his *moral faculty* always judge rightly concerning actions, and determine them to be virtuous or vicious as they really in themſelves are? The author will ſay, Yes, wherever the *moral faculty* is in its right ſtate, and no ways depraved: But I believe he will not ſay this actually is the ſtate of it in any man upon earth, or even in any angel in heaven: Or, ſo much as can be the ſtate of it in any finite being whatſoever.

It follows then, that this faculty may at any time determine wrong, and even invert the true order of things; judging that to be virtuous, which is really vicious, and that to be vicious, which really is the contrary.

And here I muſt do the author the juſtice to obſerve, that in the *Analogy* he owns expreſsly, that the *moral underſtanding may be impaired and perverted*, page 117. A conceſſion, which, as I obſerv'd before, was too much wanted in his three firſt *ſermons*; and I do not remember that it is ever hinted in this *diſſertation*, or the leaſt caution given us there againſt the miſtakes of the *moral faculty*. In his *ſermons* indeed, after the paſſage above-cited, he immediately adds; *neither do there*

appear

appear any caſes which look like exceptions to this, but thoſe of ſuperſtition and partiality to ourſelves. But as ſlight as theſe exceptions may appear to the author, I believe to many others they will have a moſt *terrible* aſpect; and tho' he ſums them up in two words, thoſe words are exceeding general, and will comprehend no body knows how near an infinite number of particular caſes. What follows is ſomewhat ſurprizing, and wou'd incline one to think he intended no great ſtreſs ſhou'd be laid upon theſe exceptions. *Superſtition may, perhaps, be an exception; but partiality to ourſelves is not*; ſo the two exceptions are now reduced to one, and this one is allowed only in a very qualified way, with a *perhaps*. But what is the reaſon why *partiality to ourſelves* is not an *exception*? Becauſe it is, he ſays, *itſelf diſhoneſty; for man to judge that to be the equitable, the moderate, the right part for him to act, which he wou'd ſee to be hard, unjuſt, oppreſſive in another, this is plain vice, and can proceed only from great unfairneſs of mind.* Now is this any reaſon why *ſelf-partiality* is not an *exception* to his rule? It ſeems to be the very plain reaſon for it; and he fairly allows, that *conſcience* may be ſo corrupted as not to diſapprove in a man's own caſe what it wou'd condemn in any other perſon's. This therefore is really an *exception*, and a very great one. The author it is true puts the inſtance of a *plain honeſt man*; and ſo may think that *ſelf-partiality* can be no part of ſuch an one's character. But if he means a man ſo tho-

thoroughly *plain* and *honeſt* as to be incapable of *partiality* in every degree of it, he has put an inſtance that is not to be met with in life; and then what is ſaid with reference to it will ſignify nothing; for what can it ſignify to ſay what a *plain honeſt man* may do, if ſuch a one is no where to be found? But if this *plain honeſt man* is capable of *partiality* (which every man upon earth is) then *partiality* is an *exception* as really as *ſuperſtition*: And I believe too, that neither the author, nor any one elſe will pretend to fix the degree beyond which *partiality* even in an *honeſt man* will not go.

And as to the other, *ſuperſtition*, the whole world has in all ages had ſuch *terrible* experience of it, that it cannot, with any modeſty, be denied to be an *exception*; and it ſhou'd be remarked likewiſe, that the idea of *conſcience* is included in the very meaning of the word *ſuperſtition*.

But then I obſerve further, that whereas the author in his *ſermons* ſays, there do not *appear to be any other exceptions* but theſe two of *ſuperſtition* and *ſelf-partiality*, he does now in the *Analogy* mention ſeveral others which do not ſeem capable, all of them, if any, of being included in thoſe two words, how general ſoever they are; for here he allows, that *faſhion, cuſtom, ſlight notions of honour*, or *imaginations of preſent eaſe, uſe and convenience to mankind*, may warp the *moral faculty*, and pervert its determinations. But take his own words, *page* 117. *Yet our liableneſs, in the degree we are liable, to prejudice and perverſion,*

is a moſt ſerious admonition to us to be upon our guard, with reſpect to what is of ſuch conſequence as our determinations concerning virtue and religion; and particularly, not to take cuſtom------for the only moral rule----And here in the margin he refers to his *diſſertation* upon virtue; where yet there is not, quite thro', the leaſt ſhadow of a caution that I have found, given us upon this head; much leſs is this caution purſued there, more particulars mentioned, and clear directions given for the rectifying the *moral faculty*, when the determinations of it happen at any time to be wrong, thro' ſuperſtition, partiality, cuſtom, faſhion, ſlight notions of honour----or any other cauſe or occaſion whatſoever.

But this reminds me to put the queſtion ſeriouſly to the author, upon ſuppoſition of the moral underſtanding's being at any time, or in any degree *depraved*, and its determinations conſequently wrong in any caſe; how muſt the one and the other be rectified? The latter, perhaps it will be ſaid, may be done by rectifying the moral underſtanding; its dictates then will be right: But how muſt the underſtanding itſelf be ſet to rights? this is a queſtion he is greatly concerned to anſwer, after he has built a diſſertation upon virtue on the determinations of this faculty, and yet ſo frankly owns that its determinations may be wrong.

Perhaps I may think he cannot give a conſiſtent anſwer to this queſtion, an anſwer conſiſtent with the principles he has advanc'd

concerning virtue; but this I ſhall freely ſay, that he cannot take the ſame method to rectify the moral underſtanding when depraved, as may be taken to rectify the natural or ſpeculative underſtanding when it is prejudiced or deceived with reſpect to ſpeculative or common truth.

THE method in this latter caſe is plain, and eaſy, and quite intelligible. Speculative truth is abſolute, founded in the nature and relations of things, and is what it is, whether we think of it or not, or whatever we think of it. If we think wrong concerning it in any inſtance; for example, if we think the properties of a ſquare are the ſame with thoſe of a circle; or if we think that taking equal parts from two equal quantities, the remainders will not be equal; it is better attention to the things themſelves that muſt and will ſet the judgment to rights concerning them: And I doubt not the author wou'd propoſe the ſame method to rectify a depraved moral underſtanding. This I gather from what he ſays in the *Analogy*, page 117. *But it is carefully to be obſerved, and ought to be recollected after all proofs of virtue and religion, which are only general; that as ſpeculative reaſon may be neglected, prejudiced, and deceived; ſo alſo may our moral underſtanding be impaired and perverted, and the dictates of it not impartially attended to. This indeed,* as he goes on, *proves nothing againſt the reality of our ſpeculative or practical faculties of perception, againſt their being intended by nature to inform us in*

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the theory of things, and inſtruct us how we are to behave------

As for the *proofs* of any ſort of *virtue*, I know of none that the author has advanced either in the *analogy*, or the *diſſertation*, or any where elſe; but the moral nature of man, or the moral underſtanding. This moral underſtanding ſhews virtue, and proves it to be what it is.

But (not forgetting for what purpoſe this paſſage is here cited) I cannot forbear obſerving how perplexed the language and ſentiments are. Particularly, to what purpoſe does the author here mention the *partial manner* in which *the dictates of the moral underſtanding may be attended to?* here, I ſay, where he is obſerving how much the moral underſtanding may be impaired and perverted: This looks as if the dictates of the moral underſtanding ſhou'd be attended to, when it is depraved, as they ought to be when it is in its right ſtate. The author indeed cou'd not intend this; I dare ſay he did not mean it. But then, to what purpoſe is this complaint here of the dictates of the moral underſtanding, not being attended to *impartially*: when the only complaint that has any place or any proper connexion here, is, that of the *moral faculty* itſelf's being impaired and perverted? But to return;

The author here manifeſtly parallels the perverſion of the moral underſtanding with that of the natural or ſpeculative underſtanding; and I think fairly intimates that the

method of cure muſt be in both caſes the ſame; and there is no doubt but it muſt be ſo: But there may be a queſtion whether the author can conſiſtently with his principles propoſe this method. And I think he cannot.

He has aſſigned no other ground or rule of virtue, no other rule by which we are to judge of, to rank and diſtinguiſh our actions in the moral view, but the moral underſtanding: *this is the rule of right within us.* By this rule men may know what is virtue, and what is vice; or what actions are virtuous, and what are vicious; conſequently, what they are to do, and what they muſt forbear: and the determinations of this faculty are *laws* in the ſtricteſt ſenſe; laws of God, and inforced with explicit ſanctions: And laſtly, in a word, that in caſes of doubt and inquiry, what is virtuous or vicious, men have nothing elſe to do but to conſult their moral faculty, and this will ſufficiently inſtruct them. Now after all this, to allow that this rule may be a falſe rule, *i. e.* no rule, that the moral faculty itſelf may be corrupted, and conſequently its determinations falſe, erroneous, and even inverted, judging that to be virtue, which in in the nature of things is vice, and *vice verſa*; this is by no means conſiſtent. And to fly for the rectification of this rule to the nature of things, is plainly to ſay, that there is another and a better rule of morals, and that this which the author aſſigns, is really and truly none at all, and can never be abſolutely depended upon, or even ſafely at any time; and

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in ſhort, that it is a mere *ignis fatuus* that may in any and every caſe miſlead us.

THIS may be illuſtrated by an inſtance in ſpeculative truth. If it be aſſerted by *A* that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones; that this is a certain truth in the nature of things; and yet *B* doubts of the truth of that propoſition, or perhaps is perſuaded that it is falſe. Here *B*'s natural underſtanding is erroneous, and makes a wrong judgment; but then it is capable of being ſet to rights by attending to the nature of things, and the demonſtration which they will afford him in the preſent caſe. He reconſiders, ſees the truth, and is convinced of his miſtake. But if *A* tells *B* that tho' it is true, that the equality of the three angles of a triangle to two right ones is founded in the nature of things, and certainly demonſtrable from thence; yet that for him to ſee it, he has nothing elſe to do but to conſult his natural underſtanding, and whatever that ſays concerning it will be the truth; if *B* conſults his underſtanding, and thinks there is an inequality, *A* cannot poſſibly after this rectify this miſtaken judgment.

TAKE another inſtance, *A* tells *B* that a triangle is a figure which in the nature of things has ſuch and ſuch properties: *C* tells *D*, that in order to know what a triangle is, he has nothing to do but to ſee what his own underſtanding takes it to be; and whatever his underſtanding ſays it is, that it really is, and he may ſecurely depend upon its being ſo.

ſo. Now it is plain both *B* and *D* muſt equally make uſe of their underſtandings in order to find out what a triangle is: They do ſo, and they both judge wrong concerning it; they are therefore to be undeceived and ſet to rights. But how muſt this be done? Why, it is plain, that *A* has a very eaſy and conſiſtent way of doing it. He can deſcribe and ſet a triangle before *B*: He can point out and demonſtrate the properties of it, and ſo help him to a full and exact idea. But *C* can conſiſtently take no ſuch method; becauſe he told *D* that a triangle was whatever he took it to be, or whatever his natural underſtanding ſaid it was. And therefore if *D's* natural underſtanding ſays it is a ſquare or a circle, it muſt for ever be a ſquare or circle to him, and there is no remedy that *C* can apply.

THE application of this to what the author ſays of the moral underſtanding, and his method of treating of morals, is ſo extreamly eaſy that nothing needs to be ſaid to it.

HOWEVER to prevent miſtakes, I wou'd here obſerve, that nothing in theſe remarks muſt be interpreted, as allowing, or even in the leaſt inſinuating, that men may at any time act contrary to their conſciences, tho' ever ſo erroneous and miſinformed. God forbid! This would open ſuch a *terrible* door to all manner of confuſion as cannot be even thought of without horror. No, men muſt act according to their conſciences, and never in any inſtance contradict them. But then I wou'd never tell them that conſcience was ſo much

much as *a rule of right within them*, and much leſs that it was *the rule*----On the contrary, they ought to be perpetually informed, that an error of conſcience is as eaſy as an error of judgment in ſpeculative or common truth; and that therefore not only care, the greateſt care, ſhou'd be taken, the greateſt pains and application uſed, to inform their conſciences aright (which muſt be by conſulting, inquiring into the nature and relations of things; exactly in the ſame manner as they wou'd inform themſelves of ſpeculative or common truth) but likewiſe that pauſes are often to be made even when they are going into action upon the immediate direction of conſcience, to ſee whether there may not poſſibly be a miſtake, and conſcience itſelf want to be better informed.

And theſe cautions ſhou'd be inforced by obſerving to them, that virtue is not *relative to perception*, any more, or in any other ſenſe than ſpeculative or common truth is, *i. e.* that it is not all ſo; but is ſomething abſolute in the nature and reaſon of things, and will for ever be ſo, whatever they or any other intelligent beings may think of it, or whether it is thought of or not.

And then they ſhou'd be reminded further of the infinite diſorders that have actually ariſen in the affairs of the world, the infinite miſeries which have been produced, and cruelties and barbarities exerciſed, thro' mens following a miſtaken conſcience, without endeavouring to inform it better.

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And, among *Chriſtians*, it wou'd not ſure be amiſs to remind them in particular of St. *Paul*; who, before his becoming chriſtian, acted ſo cruel, ſo outrageous a part, merely thro' the dictates of an erroneous conſcience. That it was conſcience that put him upon it, and not any cruelty of natural temper, or any little ſiniſter views, he declares over and over again very expreſly and fully. Thus before the *Jewiſh* council, he ſays, *he had lived in all good conſcience before God, until that day*; and before the *Roman* governor, that he *had exerciſed himſelf to have a conſcience void of offence toward God and toward men*; and before *Agrippa*, yet more largely and emphatically, *I verily thought with myſelf*, ſays he, *that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jeſus of* Nazareth; *which thing I alſo did in* Jeruſalem; *and many of the ſaints did I ſhut up in priſon---and when they were put to death, I gave my voice againſt them, and I puniſhed them oft in every ſynagogue, and compelled them to blaſpheme; and being exceedingly mad againſt them, I perſecuted them to ſtrange cities.* Thus did his *conſcience* infatuate and drive him into *madneſs?* And with what ſeverity does he reflect in his cool moments upon all this conduct, tho' it was according to conſcience; calling himſelf a *blaſphemer*, a *perſecutor*, and *an unjuſt injurious* man?----

But enough of this; and I hope it will not be reckon'd too much by thoſe who conſider the occaſion rightly.

I have only one thing further to take notice

tice of, and then I have done with my remarks.

In the advertiſement prefixed to his diſſertations, the author tells us, that that upon *virtue* was in the firſt copy of his book inſerted into the chapter *of the moral government of God*; and adds, that it is *cloſely connected with it*. I am ſo much of the ſame mind, that I do not think the *chapter* is at all intelligible without the *diſſertation*, or without knowing the author's notion of virtue. When I was firſt reading it, I was obliged to break off and go to the *diſſertation*, in order to know what his notion of virtue was; but without the ſatisfaction I expected and deſired, even to make that chapter intelligible.

There are many paſſages in that chapter particularly, which mention the advantageous tendencies of virtue, the diſadvantageous ones of vice at preſent, or the natural good or bad conſequences of them. It were eaſy to cite a great many places to this purpoſe, and not only out of that chapter, but quite thro' the book. However at preſent it may be ſufficient to mention, *pag.* 67. where he ſays, *there is ſufficient ground to think*---virtue will be rewarded, vice puniſh'd hereafter, *from the good and bad tendencies of virtue and vice*; *for theſe tendencies are eſſential, and founded in the nature of things* ---- But how can theſe *tendencies* be known, till it is known what is virtue, and what is vice? And in order to know this, recourſe muſt neceſſarily be had to the author's notion of virtue and vice; which one wou'd naturally expect to find in his diſſertation concerning the *nature of virtue*.

WITH this view I first read it; but as I said before, without the least satisfaction in this particular. These *tendencies* of virtue and vice are no where there so much as once mention'd, nor I think in the least hinted at, from beginning to end. If therefore they are to be at all met with there, it must be in the author's *notion* of morals, which possibly may be such, that these *tendencies* may be clearly discerned as arising by way of natural and necessary consequence from it. But is this so? I doubt it will not be possible for the sharpest eye to see these *tendencies*, or these consequences in that notion.

WHAT he says is this: Men have a *moral understanding*; the determinations of this faculty are what we are as moral beings to attend to: It approves some actions, those are virtuous; it disapproves others, those are vicious. But he never tells us, nor so much as hints it, what is that in actions, or what is that reason, on account of which the moral understanding approves of some, and disapproves of others.

Now is there from this account of virtue and vice, any so much as a shadow of a consequence to be drawn, that the one *tends* to the happiness, the other to the misery of mankind? Hence it will follow, that tho' a dissertation upon the nature of virtue is necessary to make the *chapter of the moral government of God* intelligible; the author's dissertation has no tendency that way, and is quite *unconnected* with that chapter.

FINIS.